American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot

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by
James R. Wetzel

Youth and America's Future:
The William T. Grant Foundation
Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship

YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:
THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

When William Thomas Grant established the Grant Foundation in 1936, he sought a better understanding of the ways in which individuals adapt to the vicissitudes of life. Touched in his professional life by the importance of good human relationships, Mr. Grant wished to "help children develop what is in them" so they would better "enjoy all the good things the world has to offer them."

Fifty years later, recognizing the special needs of older adolescents in our changing society, the Foundation's Trustees established **Youth and America's Future** with much the same purpose. Its charge is to evaluate current knowledge, stimulate new ideas, increase communication among researchers, practitioners and policymakers, and, thus, to help our nation chart a better future for youth.

The Foundation's President, Robert J. Haggerty, M.D., has described the Commission's unique perspective:

"Against a rising chorus of legitimate concern about the many problems facing today's youth, the Foundation has initiated this Commission on Youth and America's Future to speak in a different voice. It will explore the strengths of America's young men and women, their families and the programs and community institutions that serve them. We adopt this approach not to diminish the importance of the problems that exist, but to learn the lessons of success. The Foundation is confident that this effort to look with renewed respect at youth, where it strides as well as where it stumbles, will help forge the links of understanding and mutual responsibility that make our democracy strong."

The publications in this series have been prepared to inform the Commission and to stimulate its thinking. While the Commission does not necessarily endorse the various findings presented, it does encourage their thoughtful consideration in the interests of American youth.

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Foreword

This study presents a sometimes overwhelming array of information on the primary focus of our Commission's study: the status and condition of American youth ages 16-24. We look here for answers to seemingly simple questions: Who are our young people? Where and with whom do they live? How do they support themselves? How many of them are finishing school, finding jobs and building families of their own? Are they doing well or faring poorly?

The answers, of course, are often difficult and elusive. Taken on average, most American youths seem to be effectively and purposefully engaged in constructive activities. They appear to be successfully navigating the critical check points of later adolescence and are making a succession of important decisions on schooling, career, personal relationships, marriage and parenthood. Their ability to do so in spite of rapid changes in the labor market, in families and other social institutions, speaks well of their resilience and vigor.

But as our Commission is especially aware, the "typical youth" does not exist. The pages that follow attempt, insofar as possible, to show some of the many faces in this collective American portrait; the statistics they present tell not one story but many. The data show a substantial minority of our young people struggling under the burdens of poverty, unemployment, school failure, underachievement and premature parenthood. Most, facing one or even two of these problems, manage to overcome them. Some, contending with several at once, are not always so able. Their number, however small, is simply unacceptable.

As the William T. Grant Foundation Commission proceeds, we hope to explore the roles and responsibilities which our young people meet in society; how we as a society—through our several levels of government, through our institutions, and also in our families and as individuals—provide support, and too often obstacles, to their full participation. We hope to understand better the interrelationships among the troubling problems they face and to explore ways in which their toll can be diminished. Our inquiry is informed by the conviction that we owe to our youth as much as we can expect from them in return.

As we embark upon our study, then, here are samples of the kinds of data and social trends we will be examining. Whenever possible, our statistics are derived from the U.S. Census Bureau and other official government agencies, since these are the largest collections of cross-sectional data and are generally accepted as reliable and authoritative. Unless otherwise indicated, our data pertain to 16-24 year-olds. As noted in our "Mission Statement," our primary focus is on this age group, but we are free to call attention to promising strategies for earlier ages.

Our special thanks go to James R. Wetzel who waded through many a government agency's murky statistical waters to bring us this snapshot of American youth.

Harold Howe II
Chairperson

American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot

Highlights

- The number of American youth is shrinking dramatically. Between 1980 and 1996, our youth population, ages 15-24, is expected to fall 21 percent, from approximately 43 to 34 million. Young people as a percentage of the nation's population will also decline from 18.8 to 13 percent.
- These falling numbers will drastically alter the characteristics of the nation's labor pool, higher education enrollments, armed forces recruiting, the nature of consumer markets, and crime rates, among others.
- The problems facing minority youth will take on even greater importance as they account for larger and larger proportions of America's youth population: the number of black youths is declining at a slower rate than whites, while the population of Hispanic youths is increasing. The rising proportion of comparatively disadvantaged youth from minority populations, especially the five percent who are immigrants, presents special challenges.
- Today's youth are living at home longer, marrying later, and having far fewer children. At ages 18-19, half are in school and two-thirds are in the workforce. Nearly half will wait until they are 24 or older to marry (23.3 for women, 25.5 for men). More than half of all women 22-24 years old have yet to bear their first child. The percentage of unmarried 20-24 year-old women more than doubled, from 28 to 58 percent from 1960 to 1986.
- Today's youth will live longer than any other generation of Americans. A white woman age 20 can expect to live to 80, and a white man to age 73. Yet, a substantial life expectancy gap persists between blacks and whites.
- Drug abuse peaked during the late 1970's and, except for cocaine use, has diminished significantly since then.
- Youths are the segment of the population most likely to be victimized by a criminal, most likely to commit a crime, most likely to be arrested. Almost one of every five teenagers and one of every six 20-24 year-olds were victimized during 1984. One out of every 15 youths experienced an assault, robbery, or rape during 1984, about triple the violent crime rate for 35-49 year-olds.

Youth in School

- Of young adults ages 25-29, 86 percent are high school graduates, twice the percentage of 1940. The school dropout rate continues its decline. The annual dropout rate fell from 6.3 percent in 1973 to 5.2 percent in 1983, with the improvement almost entirely among young black men.
- Still, students from poor families, regardless of race, are three to four times more likely to drop out than those from more affluent households. Hispanic youth are twice as likely to drop out of school before graduation as white non-Hispanic teenagers. Black youth are completing high school at nearly the same rate as whites.
- Twenty-two percent of all 25-29 year-olds have completed four years of college, nearly double the 1963 figure and four times the 1940 percentage. Yet, since 1977, when black high school graduates enrolled in post-secondary education at nearly the same rates as whites, black enrollments have fallen sharply while white rates continue to rise.

Youth at Work

- Three of every four 16-24 year-olds worked for pay sometime during 1985 and about 30 million had individual income. The median income of teenagers who work is $1,893 for males and $1,796 for females. The median incomes of 20-24 year-old men and women who had income were $8,629 and $6,155, respectively, in 1985. Minority youth reported lower incomes. In an average month, nearly 45 percent of all 16-19 year-olds are employed, (48.8 percent for whites, 33.0 percent for Hispanics, 25.1 percent for blacks).
- Unemployment remains a serious problem for young people. Early in 1987, nearly 13 percent of 16-24 year-olds in the labor force were unemployed.

- Black youth experience much higher unemployment than white youth, regardless of their education level. The percentages of teens classified as unemployed are 38.3 percent for blacks, 23.7 percent for Hispanics, 16.1 percent for whites. The unemployment rate for black high school *graduates* is one-fifth higher than the rate for white high school *dropouts*.
- The economic circumstances of young people have declined since the early 1970s when the economy was stronger. The poverty rate among 16- to 21-yearolds increased from around 11 percent in the early 1970s to 17 percent in 1985.

Young Families

- There are fewer young mothers today. Birth rates for women under 25 have declined 52 percent since 1960. Births to 20-24 year-old women fell even more, 58 percent since 1960.
- Since 1960, the proportion of teens ages 15-19 giving birth has plummeted approximately 45 percent—46.5 percent for whites, and 44.7 percent for blacks, although the percentages of those teen age mothers who are unmarried have risen sharply, going from 8.3 to 44.7 percent for whites, and from 48.3 to 87.9 percent for blacks. Out-of-wedlock birth *rates* declined for young black women but have substantially increased among white women.
- In 1984, there were 480,000 births to teens—176,000 were born to mothers 17 or younger, 34,000 to mothers 15 or younger. Of those born out of wedlock, 133,000 were born to white teens, 120,000 to black teens and 8,087 to others.
- Regardless of race, poor young women are three to four times more likely to become unwed mothers than are more affluent teens. Early childbearing is highly correlated with lower educational attainment and unemployment.
- In 1985, 30 percent of the family households maintained by youth under age 25 had money incomes below the poverty level, almost triple the 11.4 percent poverty rate for all families. 75 percent of family households maintained by women under 25 were living in poverty. The average annual income of youth-maintained families is $15,100, only slightly more than half the average for all families ($27,775).
- More than half of all youth are still living at home. By contrast, living alone in a non-family household is becoming less frequent; the number of youths doing so fell nearly 25 percent between 1980 and 1985.

• • •

Many of these statistics may sound all-too-familiar or even tedious, yet they merit our serious attention. There is clearly reason for cautious optimism: decreasing rates of crime, teen parenting, school dropout and most forms of drug abuse, as well as increased longevity and educational attainment. Still, the available evidence leaves no room for complacency. Our hope is that this statistical snapshot of young people—their education, employment, income and family patterns—will help separate fact from fiction and provide a useful resource for those interested in youth and America's future.

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This statistical snapshot was prepared by **James R. Wetzel**, *serving as a private consultant to the Commission staff, assisted by Ms. Jeanne Hickman. While remaining solely responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation, Mr. Wetzel acknowledges the contributions of Samuel Halperin and Atelia Melaville, especially in the preparation of the charts and highlights. Mr. Wetzel was trained in economics at Michigan State University and American University. In a long career of research, data development and applied economic analysis, Mr. Wetzel has served in senior positions with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Federal Reserve Board, the Council of Economic Advisors and the U.S. Census Bureau.*

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A Commentary on Data Concerning Hispanic Youth

This document contains an abundance of useful data about white and black youth, but not nearly as much as one might wish about Hispanics. The careful reader will note that this is the case; the skeptic will wonder why, for such information "must surely be available."

In fact, the federal government is collecting more data on Hispanics than ever before. But the problem, for the most part, is not one of collection. Considerable amounts of raw data are available; adequate funding for analysis and publication, however, is not. As is the case with other important issues in this era of restricted government budgets, resources from the private sector will probably have to be tapped to bring unpublished Hispanic data to light.

In the meanwhile, the best that we can hope to do is to draw attention to the deficits in information that exist and to the need for a more balanced and accurate data base. It is also important to understand why it is that Hispanic data, in particular, are so poorly analyzed.

In part, the lack of information on Hispanics in the 15-19 year-old and 20-24 year-old age groups, at a level of detail comparable to that provided for whites and blacks, is a function of their smaller numbers. Until such time as Hispanics begin to approach blacks in numerical parity, the Census Bureau could compensate by oversampling among Hispanics, a technique used successfully by other government agencies to deal with similar situations.

Hispanic data also differ from white and black data in that Hispanic respondents can be of any race. Even though the Census Bureau often reports the data from its monthly Current Population Surveys by white, black and Hispanic with the disclaimer that "Hispanics can be of any race," it is impossible to create mutually exclusive categories among these groups and so comparisons made among them are often tenuous.

A different problem arises for the user interested in Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics and other agencies' special studies and population estimates. In these publications, Hispanic data are reported separately from data by race. Months can pass before the release of Hispanic data comparable to that previously released for whites and blacks. Although not entirely satisfactory, one remedy often used outside, and even inside, the Census Bureau is to create categories for Hispanics, non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and so forth.

The problem of how to count Hispanics in racial terms is becoming increasingly difficult for the government. According to the original 1980 Census, about 40 percent of the Hispanic (Spanish-origin) population had identified themselves to be of "other races," that is, not white, black, Asian, or Native American. But because of differences in the reporting of race between the 1980 Census and other sources of administrative data (such as births and deaths), the Census counts were modified to be consistent with the Office of Management and Budget's categories.

After the modifications were made, about 93 percent of the Hispanics were listed as whites, about seven percent as black, and less than two percent in the unspecified "other races" category. Because estimates for the Hispanic population are based on the Census, and are used for a variety of government and private purposes, these modifications are no small matter. Other national surveys, especially those involving Hispanic youth, such as the *High School and Beyond* survey, have found large percentages, often majorities, of Hispanics identifying as of "other races." The obvious problem for Hispanics in this situation is that the American scheme for racial classification does not allow for intermediate categories that reflect mixtures of races, such as *mulatto* and *mestizo*, which are common in the countries of origin for most Hispanics.

Equally serious problems abound in developing population estimates and projections for Hispanics. In time, some of these problems will diminish because, beginning in 1988, a national standard for an Hispanic identifier goes into effect for use on birth and death certificates. The lack of various trend data for Hispanics is troublesome but is fortunately diminishing.

Rafael Valdivieso
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Population Overview: Past, Present and Future

As World War II drew to a close, childbearing in the United States surged to new highs. From 2.5 million in 1940, births increased progressively through an annual total of 3.6 million in 1950 to a peak of 4.3 million in 1957. Births then diminished slowly, dropping below four million in 1965.[1] The more than 75 million persons born during the high-fertility years from 1945 to 1964 are often called the Baby Boom generation. This generation is nearly 50 percent larger than that born between 1925 and 1944, and is 11 percent larger than the succeeding generation, born between 1965 and 1984.

The Baby Boom generation is sometimes compared to a "pig in a python" because it creates a large bulge in the age structure as it works its way through the various stages of the life cycle. In many respects, this is an apt description. Because of its large size, the Baby Boom generation has had an enormous impact on our society and economy. During their early years, resources had to be extensively redeployed to nurture and educate them. They swamped existing school systems, and their parents helped speed suburban development, necessitating substantial investments in public facilities such as schools, roads, and water/sewage facilities. As they reached adolescence in the 1960's, consumer spending patterns were dramatically changed and their tastes revolutionized the entertainment industry, dress styles, and social behavior. Beginning in the mid-1960's, they entered the labor force in record numbers.

Sheer size is not the only important feature of the Baby Boom generation. They were the first generation to be raised in an affluent society and, accordingly, they had more opportunity to develop their talents than their parents. They did so, reaching unprecedented levels of educational attainment. The vanguard of the Baby Boom generation, those born in 1945, are now in their early 40's and the rear guard, those born in the early 1960's, are in their mid to late 20's. As most members of this large generation have become mature adults, it is appropriate to reflect on the social and economic legacies of the Baby Boomers and the prospects for the next cohort of American youths. The current generation, of course, will face unique conditions because of the huge generation that preceded it. In some cases, such as the availability of higher education slots, they will benefit as their predecessors move on and leave behind an educational system with substantial excess capacity. In labor markets, however, the current generation may face clogged career ladders and highly competitive conditions.

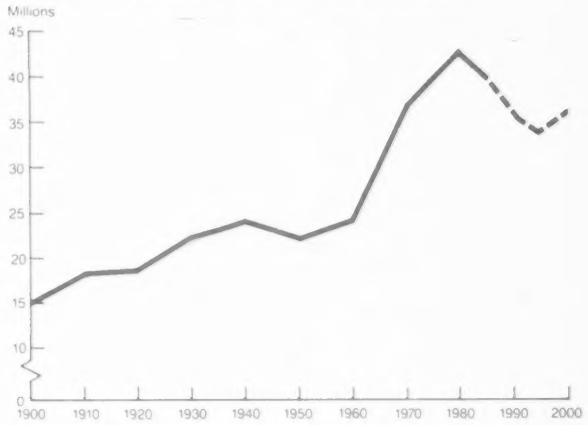
RECENT POPULATION DECLINES

The number of youths began to decline in 1980 as the late Baby Boomers reached age 25 and were replaced by much smaller cohorts of the Baby Bust era. (See Chart 1.) From a peak of 42.7 million, the number of 15 to 24 year-old Americans fell by nearly nine percent to 38.9

Chart 1

America's Youth Population

America's youth population, age 15-24, in the Twentieth Century



Youths 15-24 years-old, in millions

1900	14,951
1910	18,212
1920	18,821
1930	22,487
1940	24,033
1950	22,260
1960	24,576
1970	36,496
1980	42,743
1985	39,794
Projections	
1990	35,548
1995	34,110
2000	36,088

Source: Census Bureau, Statistical Abstracts

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million at the end of 1986.[2] Because of declines in total births from the mid-1960's though the mid-1970's and the comparative stability of fertility since then, the number of youths will decline for most of the rest of this century. **By 1996, their number is projected to total only 34.0 million, a decline of 8.7 million or 20.7 percent from 1980.**[3] This projection has a high degree of certainty, since those who will turn 15 by the year 2000 have already been born. The

only variances will arise from fluctuations in net immigration and unforeseeable changes in mortality. **With almost nine million fewer young men and women in 1996 than in 1980, youths' influence on and contribution to our economy and our society unquestionably will differ from that with which we are familiar.**

The number of youths is expected to show only moderate growth after 1996 because of the continuance of low birth rates thus far in the 1980's and because Americans continue to show a strong preference for small families. More than half of all women under age 25 indicate a preference for two children, 12 percent prefer one, and ten percent plan to remain childless.[4] Thus, almost three-fourths of today's young women prefer a family of two or fewer children. By contrast, only 40 percent of the wives in the same age group wanted a family that small and only seven percent planned to remain childless in 1967, when comprehensive birth expectations data were first collected by the federal government. By 1967, of course, the decline in fertility was already well under way. If we had had birth expectations data for the late 1950's and early 1960's, the preferred norm would have been about three children. As late as the mid-1960's, there were 3.1 children per married woman. By 1976, the number had fallen to 2.3 per married woman and it has been comparatively stable since then. In 1985, the figure was 2.2 children per married woman.

Youths now constitute 16.3 percent of the total population, down **from 18.8 percent in 1980.** Because of their dwindling numbers, the proportion of **youths in the total population will continue to fall, reaching a low of 13 percent in 1996.**[5] These falling numbers portend significantly different patterns in labor markets, in education, in the Armed Forces, in consumer markets and in childbearing. In addition to a declining proportion of youths, important changes in the race/ethnic composition of the youth population will continue.

IMMIGRATION

The United States is an increasingly heterogeneous nation. During the 1970's, we admitted more immigrants, legal and illegal, than in any decade since 1910-20.[6] Recent immigrants are drawn mainly from less-developed countries, where citizens lack the educational and other opportunities that are common in the United States and Western Europe. In 1980, one out of every twenty youths was foreign born of non-U.S. parents.[7] Any assessment of the status and prospects of youths must take into account the characteristics and backgrounds of immigrant youths. Data on their numbers, education, and socioeconomic circumstances are limited but the 1980 Census of Population made these facts clear:[8]

- *During the 1970's, the United States absorbed at least 5.6 million immigrants. By contrast, we absorbed only 1.9 million immigrants during the 1950's.*
- *Of those who immigrated during the 1970's, 1.35 million were 15 to 24 years of age in 1980. About half of these youths were from Central America, primarily Mexico and the West Indies, and 360,000 were from Asia.*
- *At the time of the Census,* ***some 700,000 youths between the ages of 14 and 24 reported that they spoke English poorly or not at all.*** *Almost half spoke Spanish at home.*
- *Of the population 5 to 17 years of age in 1980 (making them 12 to 24 years of age in April 1987), more than 4.5 million spoke only a foreign language at home. In two-thirds of their homes, Spanish was the sole spoken language.*

The differences between immigrant and native-born youths often are startlingly large. Native-born youths, for example, reported high school and college completion rates of 76.9 and 6.4 percent, respectively, at the time of the 1980 Census. Educational attainment was similar or sometimes higher among Asian and European immigrant youths. But for those from Central America, educational attainment was much lower. Only 21.5 percent of 18 to 24 year-old Mexican immigrants had completed high school and 1.1 percent had four or more years of college.[9] Immigrant flows from the less-developed nations to the south have continued, and are likely to remain strong. As a result, **for the foreseeable future, many American youths will not have had the benefit of the United States education or health care systems.**

YOUTHS BY RACE

Blacks make up a rising percentage of the total population of youths, and their proportion is expected to rise further. Like whites, **the number of black youths is declining.** However, relative to their fraction of the population, they are not declining nearly as rapidly as white youths. There were 5.8 million black youths in 1980 and an estimated 5.6 million late in 1986. Their number is expected to drop to 5.15 million in 1996. **Because of a relatively slower rate of decline, their proportion of the total youth population should rise to 15.2 percent in 1996, from 13.7 percent in 1980.**[10]

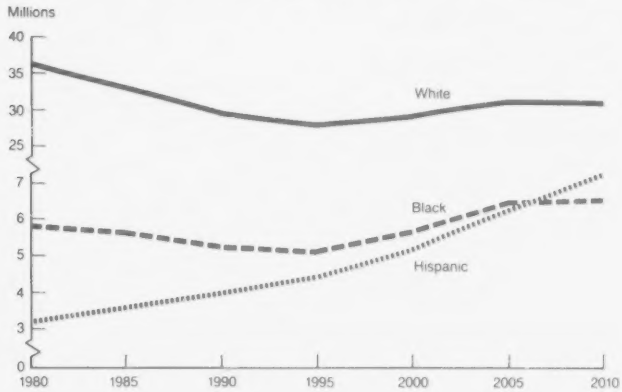
Because small populations cannot be accurately measured in most sample surveys, Native Americans and Asian and Pacific Islanders generally are lumped together and classified as "other races" in annual statistics. Consequently, accurate data on these small populations are available only at the time of the decennial censuses.

Between 1970 and 1980, the total Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States more than dou-

Chart 2

Projections of America's Youth Population

America's youth population, age 15-24, by race and Hispanic origin, 1990-2010



	White	Black*	Hispanic**
1980	35,897	5,837	3,179
1985	32,898	5,667	3,569
1990	29,110	5,266	3,917
1995	27,727	5,103	4,364
2000	29,002	5,672	5,142
2005	30,895	6,406	6,217
2010	30,883	6,516	7,232

*These figures are from the middle series of projections by the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Hispanics can be of any race and, therefore, constitute part of the white and black figures. These figures come from the high series of projection because the middle series for Hispanics assumed no undocumented immigration and a net arrival of only 5,000 Puerto Ricans on an annual basis. Both assumptions are demonstrably conservative.

Source: Census Bureau, P-25, Nc. 952 and 995

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bled to 3.5 million. Much of the increase was an outgrowth of post-Vietnam War resettlement of Vietnamese and Cambodians and continued migration from the Philippines and Korea. **Asian and Pacific Islander youths** totaled 644,575 in 1980. They **comprised 1.5 percent of the nation's youths, up from 0.8 percent in 1970.**[11]

Between 1970 and 1980, the Native American population (American Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts) in the United States more than doubled to 1.4 million, but much of the increase was a result of improved reporting of nativity. **Native American youths totaled 343,900 in 1980, or about 0.8 percent of all U.S. youths.**[12]

Taken together, **Native American and Asian and Pacific Islander youths are estimated to have increased about five percent between 1980 and 1986 and are projected to account for 3.9 percent of American youths in the late 1990's.**[13]

HISPANIC YOUTHS

The 1980 Census counted about 3.2 million Hispanic youths, or about 7.5 percent of total youths. At that time, **29 percent of Hispanic 15 to 24 year-olds were foreign born** and the proportion probably has increased since then, owing to continued high immigration. Because "Hispanic" is an ethnic identifier, Hispanic persons may be from any race group. Decennial Census figures on Hispanics who reported in one of the four races show them to be about 92.5 percent white, about 4.5 percent black, 1.9 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, and 1.1 percent Native American.[14] Reliable data on the numbers and characteristics of Hispanics in the United States are not available prior to the 1970's. (See commentary on data on Hispanics on p. i.)

Unlike whites and blacks, **Hispanic youths are estimated to have increased about ten percent during the early 1980's,** rising from 3.2 million (7.5 percent of all youths) in 1980 to about 3.6 million (nine percent) in 1986.

Looking ahead, the percentages of minority youth **are projected to rise to 15.2 percent black and 3.9 percent Native American and Asian and Pacific Islanders in 1996. Hispanic youths may constitute 11 to 13 percent of the total youth population** in 1996.[15] Regardless of age, members of minority groups experience higher unemployment, earn lower incomes, reach lower levels of educational attainment, and exhibit higher fertility.

INSTITUTIONALIZED YOUTHS

Approximately 360,000 youths (0.8 percent of their total population) were confined to institutions at the time of the 1980 census.[16] About five-sixths of the institutionalized were young men: the vast majority were in prisons, jails, or juvenile detention/correction facilities. Almost 90,000 youths (0.2 percent of their total population) were in mental hospitals or homes for the mentally handicapped. Blacks and Hispanics were disproportionately represented among the institutionalized.

INSTITUTIONALIZED 15 TO 24 YEAR-OLDS: 1980

	Total	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Total	358,981	215,736	114,906	31,083
Males	295,572	169,867	101,190	27,467
Females	63,409	45,869	13,716	3,616

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Persons in Institutions and Other Group Quarters*, PC 80-2-4D, (GPO Wash DC 1983) p.2-3

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

On a state-by-state basis, youths constitute from 14.4 to 10.9 percent of state populations.[17] Larger percentages are found in states like Alaska, Hawaii, Delaware, Georgia, and South Carolina that have, on average, relatively larger shares of their populations in the childbearing ages or high-fertility sub-populations. Lower proportions of youths are found in states with high percentages of their population in the post-childbearing years, such as Florida, Idaho and Utah, or in states of high youth outmigration.

As almost everyone is aware, geographic distributions of minority youths are sharply skewed. A disproportionate percentage of black youths live in the South, while Asians and Pacific Islanders are heavily concentrated in the West, especially in Hawaii and California. Native Americans and Hispanics are concentrated in the Southwest and West. Hispanics outside the Southwest are most concentrated in Florida and in large central cities, such as Chicago and New York.[18]

METROPOLITAN AND NONMETROPOLITAN

As a group, youths are slightly more likely to live in metropolitan areas and in central cities than the overall population. Two-thirds of all youths lived in metropolitan areas in 1980, including 28 percent who were residents of central cities. The overall pattern, however, is deceptive. Looking at white youths alone shows a close correspondence to the overall distribution of the population. Black youths, by contrast, are disproportionately concentrated in central cities and are under-represented in the suburban ring; **fully 56 percent of black youths live in central cities and only 23 percent in the suburbs. Conversely, only 23 percent of young whites live in the central cities and 43 percent live in the suburbs.**[19] The proportions in rural settings also are quite different, with blacks still more heavily represented in the South. The distribution of Hispanic youths lies between whites and blacks.

These race/ethnic residential patterns unquestionably limit the opportunities of young blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities to be competitive in our society and our economy. Minority youths are much more likely than the white non-Hispanic majority to live in areas where the schools are generally considered inferior, job opportunities are more limited, and street crime rates are high. **These patterns may curtail opportunities for personal growth and participation in many ways. In some central cities, for example, justifiable fear of street crime makes it extremely difficult to attend night school or to take a job requiring evening work.**[20]

MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

After completing high school, youths are more likely to move than other age groups. Their higher mobility is associated with leaving the parental home to attend college, enter the Armed Forces, take a job in another locale, marry and form a new family household, or establish an independent nonfamily household. The mover rate for high school age teens is close to the rate for the overall population, while youths in their early 20's are the most frequent movers. **Over the 1980-1985 period, more than six out of every ten 20 to 24 year-olds moved, half again the rate for the overall population.**[21]

Of the youths that moved at least once between 1980 and 1985, about one in five moved to another state. The rate of movement between states was about the same for youths as for the general population, suggesting that much movement of youths in their 20's is for the purpose of establishing independent households in the locale of the parental home.

Some of the state-to-state population redistribution of youths, such as that arising from service in the Armed Forces is temporary. However, the experience of youths in other locales may underpin future decisions. Thus, it may well be of consequence in future settlement patterns that the net flows of youths are decisively in favor of the West and South, the nation's most rapidly growing regions, at the relative expense of the Midwest and Northeast.

Notes

Abbreviations:
BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce

1. BOC, *Estimates of the Population and Components of Change: 1940-78*, GPO Wash. DC, 1979), pp. 25, 802, p. 8
2. BOC, *Estimates of the Population of the United States by Age, Sex and Race*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1987) P-25, 985, p. 18
3. BOC, *Projections of the Population of the United States: 1983 to 2080*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) P-25, 952, pp. 45-73.
4. BOC, *Fertility of American Women: June 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986), P-20, 406, p. 40.
5. BOC, *Projections of the Population of the United States: 1983 to 2080*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) P-25, 952, p. 65.
6. BOC, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1985) p. 84
7. BOC, *1980 Census: Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) p. 7
8. Ibid, pp. 9-20
9. Ibid, p. 13
10. BOC, *Projections of the Population of the United States: 1983 to 2080*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) P-25, 952, p. 65
11. BOC, *1980 Census, Detailed Population Character-*

istics: U.S. Summary, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) p. 7
12. Ibid, p. 11
13. BOC, *Projections of the Population of the United States: 1983 to 2080*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) P-25, 952, p. 65
14. BOC, *1980 Census, Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) p. 8
15. BOC, *Projections of the Spanish Origin Population of the United States: 1983 to 2080*, (GPO Wash. DC 1986), P-United States: 1983 to 2080, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986), P-25, 995, pp. 39-43, 49
16. BOC, *Persons in Institutions and Other Group Quarters*, PC 80-2-4D, (GPO Wash. DC, 1983) pp. 2-3
17. BOC, *State Population and Household Estimates to 1985, With Age and Components of Change*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986), P-25, 998, p. 16
18. BOC, *1980 Census, Persons of Spanish Origin by State: 1980*, PC80-S1-7, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1982) p. 9
19. BOC, *1980 Census, Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) p. 8
20. See, for example, W. Skogan, "The Impact of Victimization on Fear" in *Crime & Delinquency*, Vol. 33 No 1, Jan. 1987, pp. 135-54
21. BOC, *Geographical Mobility: 1980–85*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1987), P-20, 1008, pp. 51–6

Marriage, Childbearing and Living Arrangements

Completely reversing post-World War II trends, today's youths marry later, plan to have smaller families, have children later in life, and have fewer children than their parents did. These changes are observable across race, ethnic, and socioeconomic subdivisions of the population. Later marriage and reduced childbearing are closely related to continuing gains in educational attainment and labor force participation of young women, and to altered living arrangements of young Americans. Some analysts argued that marriage and childbearing attitudes and behaviors would be reversed as the crowding effect of the large Baby Boom cohort eased. As the next cohort—those on the cusp between the Baby Boom and the Baby Bust—entered the young adult years, however, the trends strengthened. **Delays in marriage and family formation have lengthened during the 1980's and, as a result, relatively fewer youths are responsible for families today than at any time in the prior 35 years.**

MARITAL STATUS

Today's youths are much less likely to be married than were the youths of their parents' generation. Ages at first marriage for women and men have risen by more than three years from their post-World War II lows in the late 1950's. For American women the median rose to 23.3 years in 1985, an all-time high. The median marriage age for men was 25.7 years in 1986, its highest point since the turn of the century. **The median age at first marriage rose more than two years between 1975 and 1985,** a period of economic stress and high unemployment among youths.[22] However, young Americans began to delay marriage in the late 1950's and have continued to do so during both good and bad economic conditions.

Delayed marriage is unquestionably associated with increased postsecondary education of young women but, as is the case in many empirically-derived social science generalizations, the direction of causality is unclear. The numbers, however, are crystal clear. Almost 60 percent of all current 20 to 24 year-old women have never been married, more than double the unmarried proportion at this age in 1960. **The percent unmarried has risen steadily, from 28 percent in 1960, to 36 percent in 1970, to 50 percent in 1980, and to 58 percent in 1986.** In part, this reflects the fact that fewer women are marrying during their teens. In 1960 and 1970, nine out of ten teenage women were single. By 1986, almost 19 of every 20 teenage girls were single.[23]

Single rates for young men have always been higher than for women, so there is less room for increase in the proportion who are single. However, 20 to 24 year-old men increased their unmarried proportion to 75 percent in 1986 from 53 percent in 1960 and the percentage of teenage males who had never married rose from about 97 to more than 98 percent.[23]

Nonetheless, the total count of married youths is large. Those with spouses present in the household totaled 6.3 million (2.2 million young men and 4.1 million young women) in March 1985. The total for young men was down 27 percent (800,000) from 1980. The total for young women was down 18 percent (900,000) from 1980.[24] These declines were two to four times larger than the decline in the youth population. The extent of the delay in marriage since 1960 is best illustrated by the percentages married. **In 1985, 21 percent of all 15 to 24 year-old women were wives in married-couple families with a husband present. In 1960, 36.3 percent were already wives. In 1985, 11 percent of all 15 to 24 year-old men were husbands with a wife present. In 1960, 19.9 percent of all young men were married, almost double the 1985 proportion.**[25]

Historically, women in our society have tended to marry men somewhat older than themselves and to marry at slightly younger ages. As a consequence, women under 25 years of age are about twice as likely to be married as men. Recent figures show that when a husband is less than 25 years of age, the median age of his wife is 20.9 years. When a wife is less than 25 years of age, the median age of her husband is 25.8 years.[26]

Among young women who married before age 25, the frequency of divorce or separation is very high. In March 1985, there were 95 already divorced and 74 separated young women for every 1,000 married young women living with their husbands.[27] In 1960, by contrast, only 29 were divorced and 36 were separated per 1,000 married young women living with their husbands.[28]

LIVING AT HOME

Because the trend to later marriage has been gradual, related alterations in the living arrangements of young Americans have escaped much attention. **Over time, however, more and more young Americans have chosen to remain in their parents' home during their young adult years.** Six of every ten 18 to 24 year-old men and nearly five of ten young women this age lived in their parents' home in 1985.

In 1960, the proportions living at home were 52 and 35 percent, respectively.[29]

During 1986 an estimated 22.5 million 16 to 24 year-olds were living in families maintained by an older person, almost always a parent. **About 6.3 million—more than one-fourth—were living in a single-parent home,** usually with their mothers. Some may be contributing to the maintenance of the household, but the labor force participation rate of youths is about the same in two- and one-parent households.[30]

YOUTHS LIVING WITH PARENTS: 1986 (in thousands)

	Years of age:	
	16 to 19	20 to 24
Total	13,108	9,473
Type of family:		
Married-couple families	9,638	6,635
Female-headed families	2,909	2,203
Male-headed families	561	585

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1987, Vol 34, No 1, p. 166

YOUTHS IN NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

Youths maintaining nonfamily households rose sharply as the Baby Boom generation matured. In 1960, 2.2 percent of 18 to 24 year-old women and 2.7 percent of young men maintained independent nonfamily households.[31] Those proportions almost quadrupled by 1980, when they stood at 8.1 percent for young women and 11.1 percent for young men.[32] This upward trend was sharply reversed between 1980 and 1985. **The proportion of young men maintaining nonfamily households dropped 1.5 percentage points—about 14 percent—from 11 to 9.6 percent of their total number and the proportion of young women in that status fell 15 percent, from 8.1 to 6.9 percent of their population.**[33]

Even with the sharp decline, the number of nonfamily households maintained by persons less than 25 years of age totaled 2.3 million in 1985 (one million maintained by women and 1.3 million maintained by men). The median 1985 money income of nonfamily households maintained by youths was $15,000, not significantly different from the median for family households maintained by youths.[34] A large share of nonfamily households are comprised of persons living alone. The number of youths living alone doubled between 1960 and 1970, then tripled between 1970 and 1980 to a level of 1.7 million. **Since 1980, the number of youths living alone has declined by 400,000, a cumulative drop of nearly 25 percent in only five years.**[35] The population decline for all youths, by contrast, was only about 7.5 percent.

YOUTHS MAINTAINING FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

In 1960, more than half of all of 18 to 24 year-old women were married and living with their husbands in a family household. (A family household is defined as two or more persons related by blood or marriage sharing living quarters.) That proportion dropped to less than one-third of the total in 1985. The percentage of young men maintaining family households was cut almost in half, dropping from 31.6 percent of all young men in 1960 to 16.4 percent in 1985.[36]

Looked at in a different fashion, had young women continued to marry and be part of family households at the 1960 rate, the number of wives in such households would have been 7.1 million in 1985 rather than the actual total of 4.1 million. Had young men continued to marry and establish family households at the 1960 rate, the number of family households headed by young men would have been 4.3 million in 1985, rather than the actual total of 2.2 million.

HOUSING COSTS

Youths maintaining a household are likely to rent although a significant minority—about one of five—have a place of their own. About 1.1 million owned and 4.5 million rented their living quarters in 1983, the latest year for which detailed information is available.[37] The gross rent for the 4.5 million rental households maintained by youths was the same as for all renters—$315 in 1983—but because household incomes are lower for youths than for older adults, the cost of housing equalled 36 percent of family income compared to 28 percent for all renting households. The value of the conventional homes owned by 18 to 24 year-olds was about $42,500 compared to almost $60,000 for all owners. Housing costs absorbed 27 percent of household income for young owners compared to an average of 20 percent for all owners.

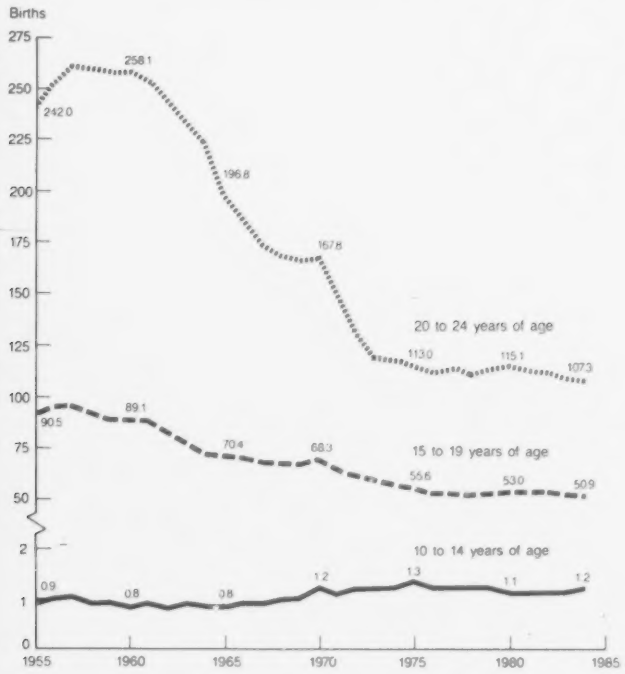
CHILDBEARING

Fertility among women of all ages, race/ethnic and income groups has dropped sharply since the 1950's. The decline among younger women has been steady and, cumulatively, very large. **Teenage birth rates fell from 89 per 1,000 in 1960 to 51 per 1,000 in 1984, a drop of 43 percent over 24 years. Among 20 to 24 year-old women the rate fell more sharply, from 258 births per 1,000 in 1960 to 107 per 1,000 in 1984, a drop of 58 percent over 24 years.**[38] **(See Chart 3)** The decline in overall fertility is, in part, a result of the availability of abortion. The latest data indicate close to one million abortions annually among 15 to 24 year-old women in the early 1980's. About 45 percent of all preg-

Chart 3

Birth Rate Trends for Young Women

(Births per 1,000 women by age)



Source: Vital Statistics of the U.S.

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nancies of 15 to 19 year-olds, and 31 percent of all pregnancies of 20 to 24 year-olds, ended in abortions.[39] Reduced early childbearing means that more than 40 percent of women in their late twenties do not have the child care responsibilities that were typical for young women in the 1960's. Nonetheless, many young women become mothers.

TEENAGE CHILDBEARING

More than one million teenage women became pregnant in 1984 and 480,000 give birth. Almost 10,000 births involved girls less than 15 years of age, and there were more than 450,000 pregnancies and 167,000 births to 15-17 year-olds. **More than half of the total births to teenagers were out-of-wedlock births—133,000 to white teenagers, 120,000 to black teenagers, and 8,087 to others.**[40] Disadvantaged young women are three to four times more likely to become unwed mothers than advantaged teenagers, regardless of race.

Of all 18 and 19 year-old women, about 13½ percent already have become mothers. About 8 percent of the unmarried and 49 percent of the married 18-19 year-olds are mothers. Few are married, however, less than half of the 495,000 mothers in this age group. White 18 and 19 year-old mothers number about 330,000; two-thirds are or have been married. About 165,000 black 18-19 year-olds are mothers; fewer than one-sixth are or were married. Seven of every ten of the 50,000 Hispanic 18-19 year-old mothers are or were married. Among 20-24 year-olds, 15 percent of the never-married and 60 percent of the ever-married are mothers.[41]

Regardless of marital status, early childbearing is highly correlated with lower educational attainment, unemployment, and poverty-level incomes. Among 18 to 24 year-olds, those who had not completed high school had an average of 865 children per 1,000, while those who had some college education averaged only 151 children per 1,000. Young wives not in the labor force had an average of 759 children per 1,000 while those in the labor force had an average of 290 children per 1,000.[42]

SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RECENT YOUNG MOTHERS

Regardless of marital status, **18 to 24 year-old women recorded an overall birth rate of 95 children per 1,000 in the year ending in June 1985, down markedly from estimated rates of 140 per 1,000 in 1970 and 195 per 1,000 in 1960.**[43]

More than 20 of every 100 currently married 18 to 24 year-old women gave birth in 1985. Eleven of every 100 divorced and widowed, and four of every 100 never-married women in this age group, had babies.[44] Births are inversely related to educational attainment, ranging from 16 per 100 women who had not graduated from high school to 3 per 100 who had completed four years of college. Current **birth rates are highest in low-income families, twice as high at incomes under $10,000 as at $25,000 to $29,990 of income,** and five times as high as those with income over $35,000.[45] The 1985 childbearing rate for white 18 to 24 year-old women was about 9 per 100 and the rate for black women was 13 per 100. Hispanic women (who are somewhat more likely than non-Hispanic white women to marry early and to stay married) had the highest birth rate: 15 per 100.[46]

OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS

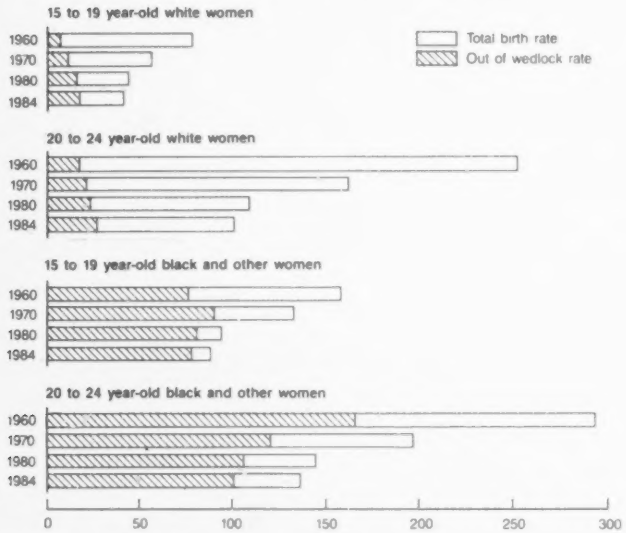
The marked decline in fertility has been accompanied by a rise in the percentage of young women who are not married at the time their children are born. **In 1984, 57 percent of teenage births were to unmarried mothers, compared to 17 percent in 1960.**

Almost one-fourth of all births to 20 to 24 year-olds were to unmarried mothers, compared to 15 percent in 1960. This trend coupled with the high separation and divorce rates among those who marry young, means that large

Chart 4

Birth Rates of Young Women by Race and Age

(Births per 1,000 women in the specified group)



	15-19 white		20-24 white		15-19 black		20-24 black	
	Total Births	Out of Wedlock	Total Births	Out of Wedlock	Total Births	Out of Wedlock	Total Births	Out of Wedlock
1960	79.4	6.6	252.8	18.2	158.2	76.5	294.2	166.5
1970	57.4	10.9	163.4	22.5	133.4	90.8	196.8	121.0
1980	44.7	16.2	109.5	24.4	94.9	81.7	145.0	106.6
1984	42.5	19.0	101.4	27.8	89.0	78.3	136.4	101.3

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1984, Vital Statistics, Vol. 35, No. 4, Supplement, July 1986, pp. 17, 32, 33

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numbers of young women are both single and mothers—a combination that often cripples their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

The birth rate for unmarried women 20 to 24 years-old rose sharply between 1950 and 1960, declined temporarily in the 1970's, and has risen since. Out-of-wedlock births to teenagers have risen quite steadily since 1950. In 1950, there were 12.6 births per 1,000 unmarried (single, widowed, and divorced) women 15 to 19 years of age: they rose to 15.3 in 1960; to 22.4 in 1970; to 27.6 in 1980; and to 30.2 births per 1,000 in 1984.[47]

Black teenagers are at higher risk of early parenthood; they account for 14 percent of the adolescent female population, about 30 percent of the teenage women who have given birth, and almost half of the unwed teenage mothers. However, **out-of-wedlock birth rates are declining for young black women.** As shown in the tabulation below, rates are down about one-tenth from 1970 for black teenagers and nearly one-fifth for black 20 to 24 year-olds. **By contrast, rates have risen substantially for whites.** The out-of-wedlock birth rate for Hispanic teens was 40 per 1,000 in 1980.

Despite this narrowing, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births are much higher for black than for white women. In 1984, approximately 8.7 percent of unmarried black

OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS PER 1,000 UNMARRIED WOMEN: 1970-84

Year	15 to 19		20 to 24	
	White	Black	White	Black
1970	10.9	96.9	22.5	131.5
1980	16.2	89.2	24.4	115.1
1984	19.0	87.1	27.8	110.7

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, *Advance Natality Statistics, 1984*, Vol.35, Supp.4, July 1986, p.p. 31-2.

teenagers had out-of-wedlock babies, compared to 1.9 percent of white teenagers. Historically, black women have delayed marriage to a greater extent than white women, but in the last decade, black teenage marriage has virtually disappeared.

CHILDREN PER WOMAN

As a result of the sustained decline in fertility, the average number of children per woman is down sharply from the 1960's and apparently has even fallen below the depressed level of 1940. **The number of children per 1,000 ever married 18 to 24 year-olds was 855 in 1980, down more than one-third from 1,304 in 1960 and marginally lower than in 1940,** as shown in the following tabulation:

CHILDREN EVER BORN TO WOMEN 15 TO 24 YEARS OF AGE : 1940-80

	1940	1960	1980
Women ever married, millions	3.9	5.0	6.1
Children ever born, millions	3.5	6.5	5.2
Children per 1,000 women	903	1,304	855

Source: Bureau Of the Census, *1980 Census, Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash DC, 1984) pp. 17-22

BIRTH EXPECTATIONS

There has been a substantial decline since the mid-1960's in the average number of lifetime births expected by young wives. For 18 to 24 year-old wives, the expected number of children declined from 2.9 in 1967 to 2.2 in the mid-1970's, and since then have averaged around 2.2.[48] The birth expectations of young black wives are slightly higher than for white wives and currently married women expect slightly more births than single women.

A strong preference for small families is illustrated by the fact that 55 percent of wives 18 to 24 years old anticipated having no more than two children during their lifetimes, compared with 37 percent of wives of this age in 1967.[49] The proportion of young wives expecting to remain childless or to have only one child increased from 7 to 17

percent between the mid-1960's and 1985. Overall, **7 of every 10 currently married young women expect to have two or fewer children,** compared with less than one out of every two in 1967. Among single women 18 to 24 years old in 1985, the two-child family was also the size most commonly expected, while about 15 percent expect to remain childless.

THE OUTLOOK

Birth rates have declined sharply but childbearing by young women in and out of marriage remains high. During 1987, as many as 500,000 out-of-wedlock babies may be borne by women in their teens and early 20's. Most of these young women will have to assume the full burden of supporting and nurturing their children, and a very large share of them are not equipped with the education, training, or work experience to give their children a secure and financially-viable home. Many young mothers will divorce or separate from their husbands during 1987, and they, too, will face a difficult path as they try to support and nurture their families. Many eventually will marry, but, in the meantime, opportunities will be foregone. As the next section shows, poverty is a nearly universal condition among young mothers attempting to make it on their own.

Notes

Abbreviations:

BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce
BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor
NCHS: National Center for Health Statistics, Department of Health and Human Services

22. BOC, *Households, Families, Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1986*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 412, p. 4
23. Ibid, p.5
24. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 17 and 1980 Census, Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) pp. 67-72
25. BOC, *1960 Census: Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary*. Vol 1, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1964) p. 424
26. BOC, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1985*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 411, p. 88
27. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 17
28. BOC, *1960 Census: Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary*. Vol 1, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1964) p. 425
29. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 74 and *1960 Census: Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary*. Vol 1, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1964), p. 178
30. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1987, Vol.34 No. 1, p. 166
31. BOC, *1960 Census: Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary*. Vol 1, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1964), p. 186
32. BOC, *1980 Census, Detailed Population Characteristics: U.S. Summary*, PC80-1-D1-A, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1984) p. 99
33. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 74
34. BOC, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, Advance Report, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-60, 154, p. 20
35. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 20
36. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 74 and *1960 Census: Characteristics of the Population: United States Summary*. Vol 1, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1964), p. 178
37. American Housing Survey, 1983. Unpublished data.
38. NCHS, *Advance Natality Statistics, 1984*, Vol.35, Supp.4, July 1986, p. 17 and earlier reports
39. BOC, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1985) p. 66
40. NCHS, *Advance Natality Statistics, 1984*, Vol.35, Supp.4, July 1986, pp. 14, 31-2
41. BOC, *Fertility of American Women: June 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986), P-20, 406, p. 11
42. Ibid, pp. 13-14
43. Ibid, p. 22
44. Ibid, p. 3
45. Ibid, p. 12
46. Ibid, p. 4
47. NCHS, *Advance Natality Statistics, 1984*, Vol.35, Supp. 4, July 1986, pp. 31-2 and earlier reports
48. BOC, *Fertility of American Women: June 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986), P-20, 406, p. 29
49. BOC, *Previous and Prospective Fertility: 1967*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1974) P-20, 211, pp. 13-14

Family Income and Poverty

Despite declines in marriage rates among the young, about one of every 12 American families is headed by a person less than 25 years of age.[50] Only a small fraction of youths earn enough to support a family adequately. In fact, **one out of every five families with an annual incomes under $5,000 are headed by youths. Youth-headed families have income 46 percent below the average for all families ($15,100 versus $27,775.)** Only about 24 percent of family households maintained by youths had incomes in excess of $25,000; in most cases, that was a function of two workers bringing in pay checks.[51] The trend toward sustained labor force participation of young women, whether mothers or not, wives or not, demonstrates that the desired level of living of young Americans usually can not be achieved by the sole efforts of a single earner.

YOUTHS MAINTAINING FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

Although the proportion of youths maintaining family households has declined steeply, there were 3.1 million such households with 8.7 million members in 1985. Two- and three-member families are typical, but a sizeable minority (20 percent) have four or more members. There were nearly 2.9 million children present in these families, almost all of them less than six years old.[52]

TYPES OF YOUTHS' FAMILIES

The family households of young Americans divide almost equally into three categories: childless married couples; married couples with children; and families comprised of a single parent, usually a woman, with one or more children.[53]

At present, about one million family households are young, often newlymarried childless couples. In the majority of these households, both husband and wife work and their family income is at the high end of the earnings range for this age group.

Slightly over 1.1 million family households are comprised of young married couples with children. These families include a total of 1.7 million children. Wives in these households are slightly less likely to work and family incomes are somewhat lower than for childless households.

The remaining one-third of family households supported by American youths—almost one million—are single-parent (almost entirely mother-child) family households. About 1.1 million children, mostly under age six, live in these households maintained by mothers without husbands present. **Three-fourths of family households and 80 percent of the individuals in family households maintained by a woman under 25 years of age, were living in poverty in 1985.** Young mothers maintaining separate homes with their children are disproportionately black or Hispanic. More than 300,000 (almost 45 percent of the total) of these husbandless households were maintained by young black women; their poverty rate was 86 percent. Young white women caring for children in separate households, without the aid of the childrens' fathers, numbered 400,000; their poverty rate was 68 percent. Hispanic women independently maintained almost 100,000 households with young children with a poverty rate of 78 percent.[54]

FAMILY INCOME OF YOUTHS

The annual income of youths' families varies with the demographic composition of the family in the same general manner as adult families, except that the annual income is lower. Annual incomes are highest in married-couple families in which the wife works full-time—the median income of these families was $22,871 in 1985—and are lowest in female-headed families—median money income was $4,700 in 1985. Between the extremes were families in which the wife worked part-time—$19,320; families in which the wife was unemployed—$16,197; and families in which the wife was not in the labor force—$13,744. As illustrated in the tabulation below, **the median annual income of white youths' families exceeded that of black youths' families by a minimum of 16 percent for analogous family-labor market status groups.**

Black married-couple families in which the wife worked full-time had a median annual income of almost $20,000, but only one-tenth of black youths' families are in this category compared to one-third of white youths' families. Six of every ten black families maintained by youths are comprised of mothers and their young children. Their median annual income was $3,917 in 1985. Less than two of every ten white families was comprised of a mother with young children. Their median annual money income was $5,561, 42 percent greater than for young black mothers. Because of the large difference in the marital composition of families, the average income across all types of families by race shows a wide gap. On average, the

MEDIAN MONEY INCOME OF YOUTHS' FAMILIES BY RACE: 1985			
Family type	Whites	Blacks	Percent Difference
Married-couple families:			
Wife worked full-time	$22,823	$19,754	16
Wife worked part-time	20,013	n.a.	
Wife unemployed	16,980	14,132	20
Wife not in labor force	14,074	10,477	34
Male head of family (no wife present)	16,322	13,551	20
Female head of family (no husband present)	5,561	3,917	42

Note: There are too few Hispanic families in the sample to provide data.
Source: Bureau of the Census, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC 1987) P-60, 158, forthcoming

families of black youths have only 37 percent of the median annual income of the families of white youths. The situation for the families of Hispanic youths is apparently closer to that of whites than blacks.

POVERTY AMONG YOUTHS' FAMILIES

Of the 3.1 million family households maintained by youths, **30 percent had money incomes below the official poverty level in 1985.** That compares with a poverty rate of 11.4 percent for all families. White youths' families accounted for two-thirds of the total—661,000 out of 2.7 million families. Their poverty rate, at 25 percent, was less than half that of young black families—62 percent (283,000 out of 455,000 families.) The poverty rate for Hispanic families maintained by youths was 40 percent (165,000 out of 409,000 families.)[55]

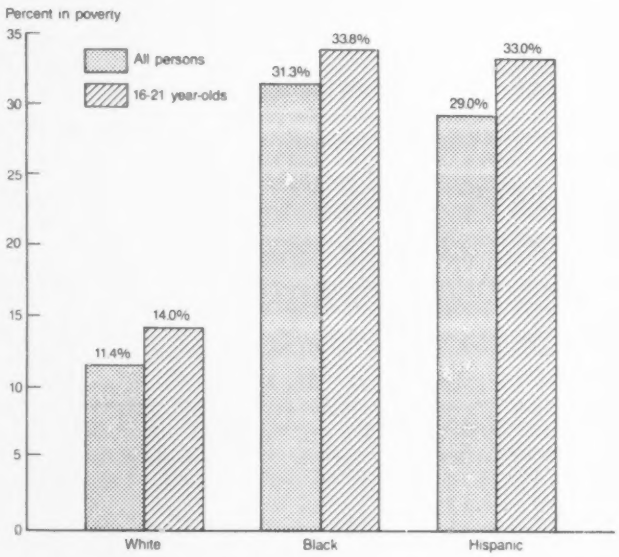
In all, almost one million youth-headed families were officially classified as being in poverty in 1985. These families included 1.2 million children, almost all of them below six years of age. Six out of ten of these poverty families were headed by a young mother attempting to care for her children without the help of their fathers.[56]

YOUNG MOTHERS IN POVERTY

The young women living in poverty generally have less education than their childless peers, and they are less likely to be enrolled in school. A young woman with less-than-average schooling, and the responsibilities of caring for young children, has scant chance of achieving or sustaining a middle-class standard of living.

In addition to the young women with children who are trying to make it on their own in separate family house-

Chart 5
Poverty Rates of 16-21 Year-Olds, 1985



	Total persons			In poverty			Poverty rate		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
All ages	200,918	28,485	18,075	22,860	8,926	5,236	11.4%	31.3%	29.0%
16 to 21	18,225	3,182	2,075	2,557	1,076	686	14.0	33.8	33.0

Note: numbers in thousands

Source: Census Bureau, unpublished OEO tabulations

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holds, there are a substantial number of single mothers who live with their children in others' households, usually in their own parents' homes. Mother-child subfamilies residing in another household numbered 817,000 in 1985.[57] They included one million children. A substantial percentage of these single-mother subfamilies also have poverty-level incomes.

In all, there are 1.8 million mother-child families containing more than two million children. Most of these young women will spend much of their lives fighting an uphill battle for economic survival. Social science analyses of the short-and long-term adverse correlates of poverty could easily fill the remainder of this monograph. To name just a few:

- *Children from poverty backgrounds are more likely to have learning disabilities, to fall behind in school and to drop out of school.*
- *Children from poverty backgrounds are more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system, to be confined in juvenile detention facilities and, when older, to be arrested and incarcerated for both violent and property crimes.*

- *Teenage girls from low income families are three times more likely to become mothers than their economically better-off peers.*
- *Youths from poverty backgrounds are less likely to be in the labor force and, when they are, they are more likely to be unemployed. Those who are employed tend to have lower earnings.*

In 1985, most young mothers maintaining separate homes with their children had never been married.[58] This is a sharp change from the 1960's, when most young women maintaining separate family households were divorced or separated. In 1985, only one-third were divorced or separated. Of all divorced or separated 15 to 24 year-olds, only 44 percent were awarded and 33 percent actually received financial assistance from the absent fathers. Only a tiny portion of those who had borne children out of wedlock had any financial help from the childrens' fathers.[59]

Notes

Abbreviations:
BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce

50. BOC, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 9
51. BOC, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-60, 154, p. 12
52. BOC, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1985*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 411, p. 97
53. Ibid, p. 62
54. BOC, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, Advance Report, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-60, 154, p. 31
55. Ibid, pp. 29-30
56. BOC, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1985*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 411, p. 97
57. BOC, *Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons: 1984*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-60, 151, pp. 41,53
58. BOC, Household and Family Characteristics: March 1985, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 411, p. 81 and *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 410, p. 11
59. BOC, *Child Support and Alimony: 1983, Supplemental Report*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-23, 148, pp. 4, 17, 23

Education

The most important transition process engaging most youths is the acquisition of the skills and experience necessary to earn an adequate living during their adult lives. In the 40 years since the end of World War II, this has become an increasingly difficult and uncertain task. Economic unpredictability, technological advances, growing international interdependency, and the globalization of production has created uncertainties about the future prospects of even the most powerful firms and the most crucial occupations.

Social trends, too, have contributed to the uncertainties. Young women of the 1950's generally planned on marrying, raising families, and remaining out of the labor market for the rest of their lives. For the mothers of the current generation of youths, predicating their lives on such an assumption often resulted in unhappy outcomes, as the divorce rate soared and, ill-equipped for the world of work, they found themselves cast in the role of family breadwinner.

Today's young women are well aware that they will have to provide for themselves for some significant period of years, both before and after marriage. Moreover, a substantial majority of married women now plan to stay in the labor force throughout their married and childrearing years, either to maintain or improve their families' standard of living.

Prior to World War II, direct on-the-job training was by far the most important path to future earning power. With the advent of the GI Bill, however, formal institutional education took on increased significance. With the launching of Sputnik in 1957 and the growing technical and administrative complexity of the economy, postsecondary formal institutional education became increasingly important in preparing for the world of work.

By the late 1960's, about half of all recent high school graduates were enrolling in college within a year of high school graduation. Of course, many found themselves ill-prepared or insufficiently motivated and dropped out. Simultaneously, however, there were large gains in college completion rates and the knowledge gained by a larger share of the population was instrumental in the rapid growth of the economy.[60]

BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Any assessment of the educational progress of youths and their prospects of constructive participation as adults must take into account the fact that a small but significant minority do not have the intellectual or physical capacity to complete, or in some cases even to undertake, a serious scholastic program.

Experts do not agree on the proportion of youngsters in any given cohort who are unable to complete a conventional high school program. However, recent data indicate that one of every 20 youths has some form of functional limitation and almost one in every 100 has a severe limitation.[61] Another indicator is the use of special educational services for the handicapped. In 1984, almost 11 percent of the elementary and secondary school population was served by special education for the handicapped programs. **The school population being served under the classifications of severely emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, and learning disabled were 0.9 percent, 1.7 percent, and 4.6 percent, respectively.**[62] Many of the youngsters in these three categories have been held back one or more grades and usually test at very low achievement levels for their ages.

Another constraint on school achievement is institutionalization for legal reasons. At the end of 1986, at least 250,000 youths, mostly males, were in jail, prison, or juvenile detention or correction facilities.[63] Only about 42 percent of prison inmates have a high school degree, according to a 1979 survey of the characteristics of prison inmates, and most are unlikely to go on to obtain a diploma or a GED. Perhaps more important, **upwards of 625,000 juveniles are incarcerated each year, at least temporarily, in juvenile detention facilities.**[64] Although evidence is skimpy, the majority of these youths probably are academically behind their peers and many are already dropouts.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In less than half a century, the percentage of young adults who complete high school has more than doubled, while the percentage of those who complete four or more years of college has almost quadrupled. Long-term relative gains in educational attainment among blacks—who started at very low completion rates before World War II—are more dramatic than for whites: the proportions of both high school and college graduates among young blacks have risen sevenfold from 1940.[65] **(See Chart 6)**

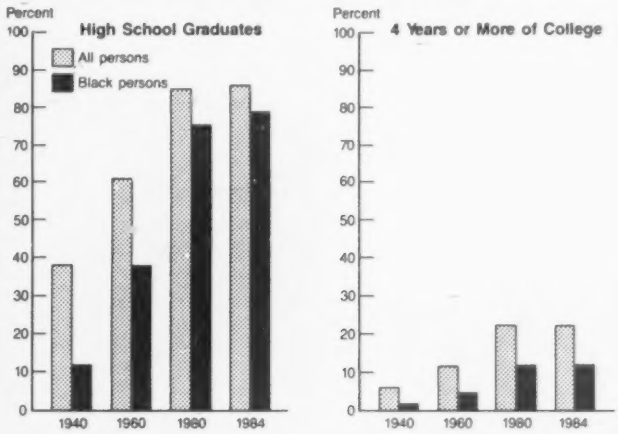
At present, about 86 percent of 25 to 29 year-olds are high school graduates, compared with proportions of 66 percent in 1966 and only 38 percent in 1940. The proportion of young adults who complete four years or more of college also has risen sharply as both college attendance

Chart 6

Educational Attainment

American youths' educational attainments are remarkable. In less than half a century, the percentage of young adults who have completed high school is up 225 percent, while the percentage of those who have completed four or more years of college has risen 371 percent. Educational attainment among blacks is even more dramatic, up 679 and 725 percent, respectively.

Years of School Completed by 25-29 Year Olds



	1940	1960	1980	1984
All persons (25-29)				
Completed high school	38.1	60.7	84.5	85.9
4 years or more of college	5.9	11.1	22.1	21.9
Blacks				
Completed high school	11.6	37.7	75.2	78.8
4 years or more of college	1.6	4.8	11.4	11.6

Source: Census Bureau, "Statistical Abstracts"

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and completion rates increased over the post-World War II period. **In 1986, almost 22.5 percent had completed four or more years of college, up from 13 percent in 1962 and 6 percent in 1940.**

Long-run gains in education are widespread by race, ethnic group, and gender. Nevertheless, substantial gaps remain between whites and blacks and Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Before attempting a college education, of course, youths must complete a conventional elementary and secondary program, or earn a GED. The gaps in college attendance by race and ethnicity start at the high school level or before, as some youths fail to complete a conventional program.

HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

The high school completion rate of American youths rose steadily from the end of World War II until the late 1970's, then leveled off at about 86 percent of the eligible population. Young men's completion rates eroded slightly in the late 1970's. In 1978, the percentage of male 25 to 29 year-olds who were high school graduates reached an all-time high of 86.6 percent. Since then, the percentage of young male graduates has seldom been higher than 86 percent; it has averaged a shade less than 86 percent for the past three years.[66] The fall-off is primarily among whites from poor families, and appears to be predominately comprised of Hispanic youths. As of October 1985, about 86 percent of all 18 to 24 year-olds had completed at least a high school education: 86.5 percent of whites, 82.5 percent of blacks; and about 70 percent of Hispanics.[67]

In contrast to men, educational attainment levels of women have continued to rise, albeit at a much slower pace than earlier in the post World War II period. At nearly 87.5 percent over the past three years, the percentage of young adult women who are high school graduates was up about two percentage points from the late 1970's and still rising among both white and black women. Data on Hispanic women, only available from the early 1970's to date, show a moderate increase in the proportion with high school degrees but the percentage of young Hispanic women who have not completed high school is still around 20 percent, much higher than for either white or black women.[68]

HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATES

The vast majority of adolescents are enrolled in high school, though the percentage enrolled declines noticeably at age 16. As the tabulation below shows, enrollment rates are lower across the board for Hispanic youths, and black enrollment rates fall sharply compared to whites at the modal age for initial college attendance.

YOUTHS ENROLLED IN SCHOOL BY AGE: OCTOBER 1985

(Percent of age group enrolled)

Age	Total	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
14 and 15 years	98.1	98.1	97.9	96.1
16 and 17 years	91.7	91.6	91.7	84.5
18 and 19 years	51.6	52.4	44.1	41.8
20 and 21 years	35.3	36.1	27.7	24.0
22 and 24 years	16.9	17.0	13.7	11.6

Source: Bureau of the Census, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: 1985*, (GPO Wash DC 1986), P-20, 409, pp. 8-9

School performance, including completing a full program and graduation, and the economic status of the student's family are closely correlated. Researchers have found that black, white and Hispanic youngsters from equivalent socioeconomic situations are almost equally likely to be enrolled in school. Students of the same sex from equivalent economic status families are almost equally

likely to be enrolled in the modal grade for their specific age, although females are more likely than males to be enrolled in their modal grade. **Being from a single parent home or having a working mother is not associated with falling behind in school, once economic status is taken into account.**[68]

HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS

In the fall of 1985, **there were 3.8 million 18 to 24 year-olds who had quit school before earning a diploma.** Hispanic youths, some of whom are immigrants, made up a disproportionate share of the total. Although black youths outnumber Hispanic youths in the population by more than three to two, **there are fewer black (655,000) than Hispanic (700,000) youths who have not finished high school.**[70] Because Hispanics may be of any race, there is some overlap between blacks and Hispanics but, as noted earlier, most Hispanics are considered white. The proportion of non-Hispanic whites graduating from high school apparently has continued to edge higher.

YOUTHS WITHOUT DIPLOMAS AND NOT IN SCHOOL

(Percent of age-race group)

Age	Total	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
16 and 17 years	7.0	7.1	6.5	14.5
18 and 19 years	14.3	13.8	17.3	30.6
20 and 21 years	13.9	13.4	17.7	27.9
22 and 24 years	14.1	13.3	17.8	33.9

Source: Bureau of the Census, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: 1985*, (GPO Wash DC 1986), P-20, 409, pp. 8-9

Regardless of race, students from poor families are more likely to drop out than those from more affluent households. (See Chart 7)

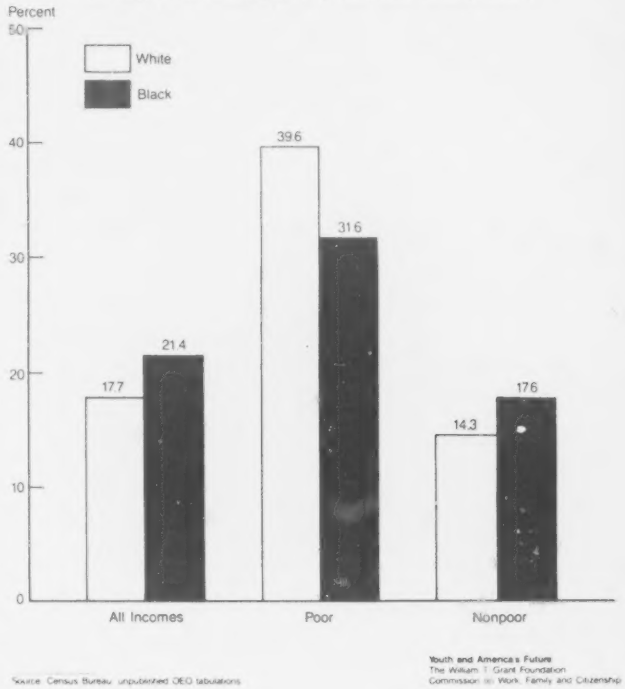
The news value of high dropout rates has increased with the nationwide trend toward higher state-enforced minimal standards for student achievement. However, the statistics most often cited in media discussions of the dropout problem—gross dropouts and expulsions—do not measure the "real" dropout problem. The essential statistical problem of assessing school system losses is that one school's dropout may be another school's accession, or a GED "graduate." Thus, local or state reports on gross dropouts may be quite accurate, but a very poor indicator of the extent or even the direction of national dropout trends. In response to this problem, the Education and Social Stratification Branch of the U.S. Bureau of the Census analyzed changes in the school enrollment of youths with the intent of measuring the net dropout rate.

Chart 7

Poverty and Dropouts

Regardless of race, students from poor families are far more likely to drop out than those from non-poor households. The percentage of poor white dropouts substantially exceeds that of poor blacks.

Persons Ages 20-21 not Enrolled in School in March 1986 and not High School Graduates, by Race and Poverty Status



Source: Census Bureau unpublished OED tabulations

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In October 1973, there were 638,000 14 to 24 year-olds who had been enrolled in school a year earlier, who were not currently enrolled, and who had not completed high school. By October 1983, the number of dropouts was 535,000. Thus, **the absolute number of recent dropouts fell by 22 percent over the 10-year span.** The school-age population also fell but, taking that decline into account, **the annual dropout rate fell from 6.3 percent in 1973 to 5.2 percent in 1983.**[71]

In 1983, grade-by-grade dropout rates were 3.7 percent for the 10th grade, 4.5 percent for the 11th grade, and 7.5 percent for the 12th grade. For 1973, the rates were 5.4 percent, 6.5 percent, and 7.1 percent for the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, respectively. Because the grade-by-grade reduction of dropping out is concentrated in the earlier years of high school, the total school exposure of 1983 dropouts is higher than for 1973 dropouts. This provides a better basis for future school completion by recent dropouts and, if they do not return to school, they still have greater educational exposure than their predecessors.

The analysis shows a **pronounced reduction in the cumulative dropout rate from an estimated 18 percent in 1973 to**

about 15 percent in 1983. The improvement was almost entirely among young black men; their estimated cumulative proportion dropping out was reduced from 32 percent in 1973 to about 20 percent in 1983. The 1973 and 1983 figures for white males were 17 and 15 percent, respectively.

Statistical evidence supporting this analysis is provided by the *National Longitudinal Study of High School and Beyond,* which followed the progress of a representative national sample of 1980 high school sophomores over the four following years. In all, 14 percent of the sophomores in the survey dropped out of school before graduation, very close to the Census estimate of about 15 percent.[72]

The *High School and Beyond* study also confirms a wide range of qualitative observations about dropping out. Generally, the likelihood of dropping out is inversely related to family income and varies directly with parental educational attainment and occupational status. Reflecting population distributions, the data show higher dropout rates in the West and South and in urban areas, where poor and minority populations are proportionately larger.

A significant minority of high school dropouts eventually will obtain a high school degree, either by returning to school or by earning a GED. *The High School and Beyond* study showed that about **one of every ten youths who had dropped out between the spring of 1980 and the spring of 1982 had returned to school by the fall of 1982.** The likelihood of returning to school was in the same pattern as the likelihood of not dropping out in the first instance. Thus: [73]

- *Returning dropouts were more numerous from student groups with the lowest dropout rates.*
- *Dropouts from higher-income families were more likely to return than those from low-income families.*
- *Dropouts whose parents were more highly educated or held professional jobs were more likely to return than those from less educated or blue-collar working families.*
- *Urban dropouts were less likely to return to school than suburban or rural dropouts.*
- *Females were more likely to return to school than males.*

Black and Hispanic youths still are more likely to drop out of school than white teenagers, and are less likely to be high school graduates than are non-Hispanic whites. The difference appears to be associated with economic factors. In 1985, only 56 percent of black and 53 percent of white 18-21 year-olds from poor families had earned high school diplomas. Nonpoor black youths appear to drop out at a rate that is only marginally higher than that of white youths, and among all young people from poor families, the proportion of blacks who fail to graduate from high school is actually lower than that of whites.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT TRENDS

From the late 1950's through the early 1970's, the proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college rose. The upward trend of postsecondary education enrollment continued for young women during the 1970's. However, **college enrollment rates for young men declined abruptly after the Vietnam war ended and then trended marginally lower from the mid-1970's into the early 1980's.** Most analysts agree that the end of military service deferments based on college attendance produced the initial decline. A mix of other factors, including the rising cost of college attendance, slow income growth for youths' families, outright declines in the "real" incomes that youths could command, and a shortage of jobs for youths during the high unemployment period since 1979 probably were important.

Another factor that may have slowed the growth of college attendance is the perception that a college degree may not necessarily be a ticket to a good job. A recent analysis by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that one of every five college graduates during the 1970's took a job that had not normally required a college degree. Nonetheless, **in 1985, a record 58 percent of recent high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary programs. This was the third annual increase in the enrollment rate, and it was a significant improvement from an average rate of 51 percent over the 1970-1982 period.**

YOUTHS ENROLLED IN COLLEGE BY AGE: OCTOBER 1985
(Percent of age group enrolled)

Age	Total	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
18 and 19 years	40.4	42.9	24.1	22.2
20 and 21 years	34.1	35.1	25.4	22.4
22 and 24 years	16.5	16.6	12.8	11.1
25 and 29 years	9.0	9.0	7.1	6.1

Source:Bureau of the Census, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: 1985,* (GPO Wash DC 1986), P-20, 409, pp. 8-9

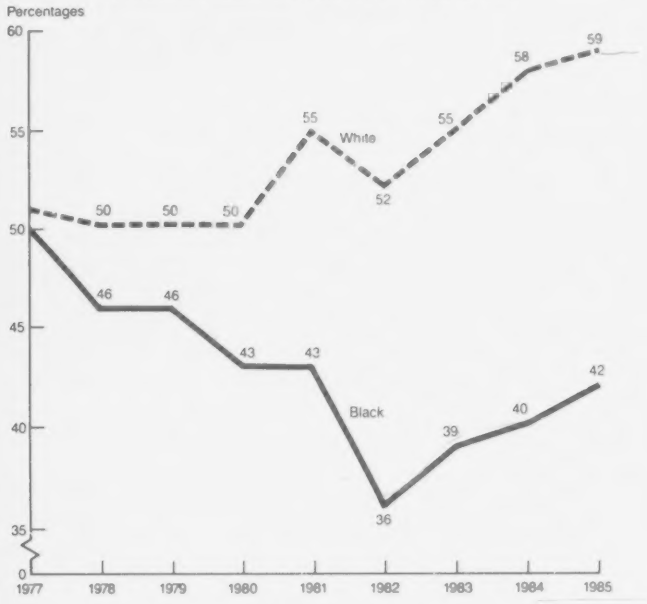
Educational attainment of whites has always been higher than for blacks, and there is still a wide gap. A considerable closure of this gap took place during the 1960's and early 1970's, but more recently the enrollment differential has widened. (See Chart 8) In 1977, recent black high school graduates were enrolling in postsecondary education at almost the same rate as their white peers. The proportion of black high-school graduates going on to postsecondary education rose to 42 percent in 1985 but remained much below the 50 percent enrollment rate of 1977. The corresponding figures for white youths were 51 percent in 1977 rising to 59 percent in 1985.[74] Reliable data

Chart 8

Postsecondary Education

In 1977, black high school graduates enrolled in postsecondary education at almost the same rate as their white peers. Since then, black enrollments have fallen sharply while white rates continue to rise.

Recent High School Graduates Enrolled in Postsecondary Education, October 1977-1985, by Race



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Monthly Labor Review" and other reports

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for Hispanics is comparatively new; in 1985, Hispanic enrollment rates were about half that of whites and somewhat lower than for blacks.

COLLEGE COMPLETION

College education gains between 1960 and 1985 have been greatest for females. The proportion of male and female high school graduates 20 to 24 years old who had completed at least one year of postsecondary education stood at 48 and 46 percent, respectively, in 1985.[75] The comparable figures for 1968 were 42 for men and 33 percent for women.[76]

In 1976-77, more than 27 percent of 25 to 29 year-old men had completed four or more years of college. This was the all-time high for college completion rates for young men. Since the late 1970's, the college completion rate of young men has drifted lower, averaging about 23 percent for the past three years. Among women, the percent with four or more years of college had risen marginally over the entire period, reaching almost 22 percent in 1986. Women appear likely to achieve parity in college graduation rates by the early 1990's.

Notes

Abbreviations:

BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce
BJS: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice
BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor
NCES: National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education

60. See for example, D. O'Neill, *Education In The United States: 1940-1983*, (GPO Wash.DC, 1985) CDS-85-1
61. BOC, *Disability, Functional Limitation and Health Insurance Coverage: 1984-85*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-70, 8, p. 13
62. NCES, *The Condition of Education, 1985 edition* (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) p. 112
63. BJS, *Report To The Nation On Crime And Justice*, NCJ-87068, (GPO Wash. DC, 1983) pp. 31-2
64. BJS, *Children In Custody*, NCJ-102457, October 1986, p. 2
65. BOC, *Educational Attainment In the United States, 1980-81*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1984) P-20, 390, p. 80, and subsequent reports.
66. BOC, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1985) pp. 20, 400, 408, 404 & 409
67. Ibid, No. 408, p. 5
68. Ibid, p. 6
69. See for example, S. Bianchi, "Children's Progress Through School: A Research Note." *Sociology of Education*, 57, July 1984, pp. 184-92
70. BOC, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic*

Characteristics of Students: 1985, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-20, 409, p. 9
71. BOC, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: 1983*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1987) P-20, 413, p. 3
72. NCES, *Four Years After High School: A Capsule of 1980 Seniors* CS 86-210 (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) pp. 42-4
73. NCES, *The Condition of Education, 1985 edition* (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) p. 209-15
74. BLS, "What happened to the high school class of 1985?", *Monthly Labor Review*, Oct 1986, pp. 28-30 and earlier reports in the same series.
75. BOC, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1985) p. 121
76. BOC, *Educational Attainment In the United States, 1980-81*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1984) pp. 20, 39, 80, and subsequent reports.

Employment and Unemployment

The transition from adolescent dependence to economic self-sufficiency through work has become more problematic, prolonged, and perplexing for today's young Americans than for any generation since those who came of age during the Great Depression. Because the nation's economy has been operating well below its potential since the early 1970's, the **competition for jobs at the bottom of career ladders is more intense, the economy is weaker, and the economic future is more uncertain.** As the least senior members of the work force, youths experience their best employment prospects during periods when aggregate demand is high and rising, and prime-age workers are in short supply. Conversely, they are particularly vulnerable to the exigencies of slack demand and slow economic growth. Consequently, the deep and prolonged economic contractions of the 1980's have been particularly harsh on young people.

The labor market circumstances of youths also are powerfully influenced by social conditions, including school attendance trends, family formation and dissolution patterns, and career expectations. **Today's youths enter the labor market earlier, and most combine school with work. Many more are from singleparent families and a significant minority are single parents themselves.** So, both economic and social factors make the transition from school to work more difficult for today's youths than it was for their parents.

In particular, labor market behavior of young women is dramatically different from that of their mothers. A much larger percentage enter the labor force now, do so at an earlier age, and intend to work indefinitely. That was not true of young women 30 years ago; the primary activity of nonstudent young women in the late-1950's was more likely to be keeping house and caring for a family.

Like their parents, today's youths experience much higher unemployment rates than prime-age workers, but the magnitude of the difference has increased. **Recently, their jobless rate has averaged 2.4 times the rate for prime-age workers (those aged 25 years or more)—up from a ratio of 2.1 to one in 1950.** Youths have not fared well in the earnings department either. In 1986, usual weekly earnings from full-time employment of young men amounted to about 53 percent of the earnings of prime-age male workers—down from 74 percent in 1967.[77] These job market difficulties are partly a result of the huge rise in the number of youths entering the work force concurrently with some of the nation's most severe economic problems since the 1930's.

LABOR FORCE GROWTH

In 1960, there were 11.5 million youths in the labor force. (The labor force is the sum of the employed and the unemployed.) **By 1979, their number had risen by an astonishing 120 percent to** 25.4 million.[78] The prime-age labor force (workers 25 years of age and older) increased by 63 percent over the 20 years, or at about half the rate of growth for youths. **By 1979, youths made up almost 24 percent of the civilian labor force, up from 16.5 percent in 1960.**[79] Population growth accounted for the bulk of the rise, but participation rate increases were very important. (The participation rate is the percentage of a group's civilian noninstitutional population that is in the labor force.) In fact, had the average labor force participation of youths remained at its 1960 level, their labor force would have grown by only 9.3 million instead of the actual rise of 13.9 million. **Increased participation, therefore, accounted for a net addition of 4.5 million youths in the job market, or nearly one-third of the overall increase between 1960 and 1979.**

Historically, men have been more likely to work than women, and that is still the case. However, this has not been a static relationship. Since the early 1950's, women have assumed an ever-larger role in the market economy, sharply increasing the growth rate of the labor force. The labor force participation rate of 20 to 24 year-old married women more than doubled, rising from 30 percent in 1960 to 61.5 percent in 1979, while the rate for divorced, separated and widowed women rose from 54.6 percent in 1960 to 73.7 percent in 1979. Teenage girls boosted their participation rate by 15 percentage points, to about 54 percent. The participation rate of male teenagers rose only one-third as much as that of teenage females. The labor force participation rate for 20 to 24 year-old men, already high in 1960 at 80 percent for single men and 97 percent for married men, actually declined slightly over the period.[80] **Thus, the extra work force increase associated with the Baby Boom generation was primarily among women.** A 20 percentage point net increase in their labor force participation rate accounted for 3.7 million "ex[illegible]" entrants by

1979. A net increase of 3.3 percentage points for young men accounted for 600,000 "extra" job candidates.

WORK AND SCHOOL

A substantial majority of the nation's students combine school with work, often beginning early in their teens. In October 1986, for example, 92.5 percent of all 16 and 17 year-olds were students and 41 percent of those in school were also in the labor force.[81] At this age, most of those who are in the labor force work only part-time, and they may confine their activities to the weekends. Their pay for such work is at the lowest end of the pay scale. Teenagers tend to be quite casual about work; most who have jobs also have families to back them up financially and many are willing to quit on short notice for personal reasons or because of school demands. As a consequence, youths, especially non-Hispanic whites, have more frequent spells of unemployment than prime-age workers but, on average, their unemployed periods tend to be much shorter.

Older youths command higher wage rates, work more hours and weeks per year, and earn much more per year. Of course, those who have other primary goals, such as going to college, generally are willing to fit themselves to the workings of the peripheral labor market; they are willing to provide labor intermittently, at low wages, and without fringe benefits or job security. By contrast, school dropouts and graduates not pursuing postsecondary education are involved in a learning process that encompasses job search and job changing to sample types and conditions of work. For the **minority** of high school graduates who do not enroll in some type of postsecondary education program, the labor market generally becomes their primary lifetime activity and their attachment to work is anything but casual. In October 1986, 88 percent of non-student 18 year-old men and 73 percent of non-student 18 year-old women were in the labor force. Similarly, **94 percent of non-student 22 year-old men and 78 percent of non-student 22 year-old women were in the labor force.**[82]

RACE/ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

The proportions of minority youths in the labor force are much lower than for whites. About 57 percent of black youths and 66 percent of Hispanic youths were in the work force late in 1986, as compared to 71 percent for whites.[83] White students are much more likely to be in the labor force than black and Hispanic students. The differences in participation rates of nonstudents is smaller than for students, as shown below:

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES: OCTOBER 1986
(percent of population in the labor force)

Age	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
Nonstudents:				
16 to 19 years	76.4	78.6	65.6	61.6
20 to 24 years	84.8	86.2	77.3	75.8
Students:				
16 to 19 years	43.9	47.4	28.1	33.4
20 to 24 years	59.1	62.1	44.2	65.6

Source:Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, Nov. 1986, Vol 33, No 11, pp. 14-5

UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

There always has been a significant gap between the unemployment rates of youths and prime-age workers. By virtue of the much larger increase in their labor force, youths faced a much more competitive market and, other things being equal, their jobless rates were bound to rise relative to those of prime-age workers. In 1980, the overall unemployment rate of youths averaged nearly 14 percent, about 2.7 times the rate for prime-age workers. In 1955, the rate for youths was 2.1 times the rate for prime-age workers. The unemployment gap has always been much larger for minority than majority youths. Since the early 1960's, the ratio of jobless black youths to white youths has risen. In 1986, the ratio was 2.4 to one, compared to a ratio of 1.75 to one in 1960, when the rapid growth of the entry age labor force began. The upward trend of joblessness among black youths vis-a-vis young white workers is illustrated in Chart 9 and the following tabulation:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF YOUTHS BY RACE: 1955-86
(percent of labor force unemployed)

Year	White	Black and others	Ratio
1955	7.9	13.8	1.75
1960	10.2	17.9	1.75
1965	9.2	16.9	1.84
1970	9.9	19.4	1.96
1975	14.5	27.6	1.90
1980	12.0	26.4	2.20
1986	11.1	26.6	2.40

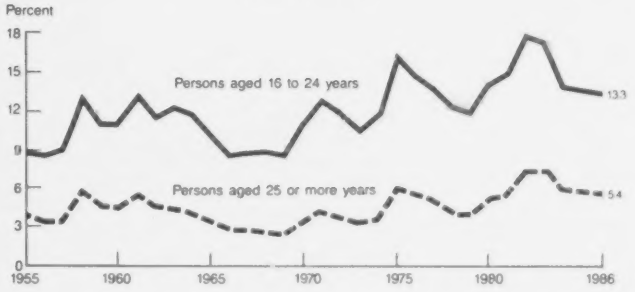
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics Derived From the Current Population Survey*, Bulletin 2096, (GPO Wash DC 1982) pp. 503, 519 and *Employment and Earnings*, Jan 1986, Vol 34, No 1, p. 158

As the tabulation illustrates, in addition to losing ground to prime-age workers, young blacks lost ground to their white peers. Indeed, the gap in jobless rates between young black and white workers was much greater in the 1980's than ever before. **The unemployment gap for white youths is merely chronic. For black youths, the gap has widened persistently.**

Chart 9

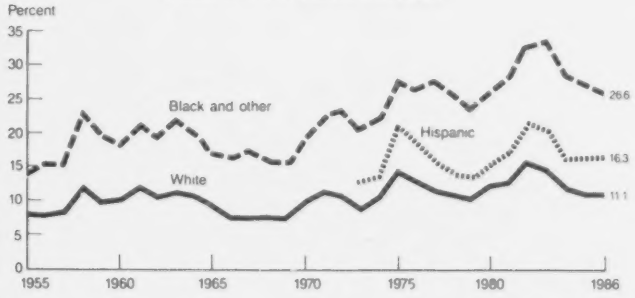
Unemployment Rates of Youths and Adults, 1955-86

(Percent unemployed)



Unemployment Rates of Youths by Race and Ethnicity

(Percent of 16 to 24 year-olds unemployed)



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings

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UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF NON-STUDENT YOUTHS: OCTOBER 1986
(percent unemployed)

Education	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
High School:				
Did not complete	24.4	20.7	47.1	17.3
Completed	11.5	9.0	27.0	11.5
College:				
One to 3 years	6.7	5.3	14.8	6.0
Four or more years	5.0	4.6	10.1	n/a

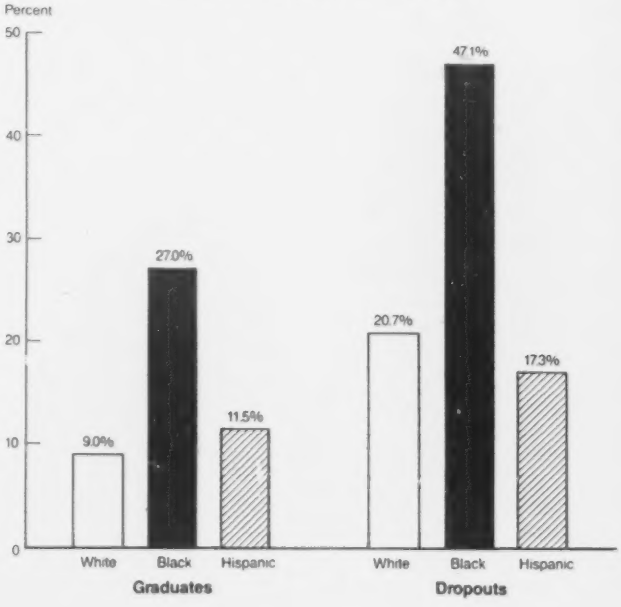
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, Nov. 1986, Vol. 33, No. 11, p. 15

Chart 10

Unemployment and Education

Even with a high school diploma, black graduates are substantially more likely to be unemployed than white dropouts.

Unemployment Rates Among High-School Graduates and Dropouts, by Race, October 1986



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, October 1986

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UNEMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Employability is a function of many factors. Paramount factors for "good" jobs, however, almost always include experience, specialized training, dependability, and well-established work habits. Youths must first find an entry-level job, and that often entails earning an educational credential. Those that do not complete high school face a very difficult transition. Dropouts carry an extra set of negative labels and gravitate to the bottom of employers' hiring lists. As shown below and in Chart 10, joblessness varies inversely and sharply with educational attainment:

At every level of education, black youths experience higher unemployment than whites. Their labor market disadvantages include lower levels of educational attainment, often in inferior schools, lack of familial contacts with mainstream job opportunities, and fewer "good" job opportunities near their homes. Hispanic youths face many of the same problems, but their jobless rates are much lower than the rates for blacks.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 1980'S

In 1979-80, the economy was poised for an era of declining pressures from the youthful segment of the labor force. The population of younger Americans was about to begin a decline that would persist through the late 1990's. This downtrend presented an opportunity to deal with the pervasive deterioration of the labor market situation of young people.

That deterioration was manifested in many ways: unemployment differences between youths and prime-age workers had increased; unemployment differences between race groups had widened dramatically; with the fundamental change in the labor force behavior of young women, their jobless rates had surpassed the rates of young men; and the wage rate and earnings experience of youths had worsened relative to prime-age workers.

Policymakers and the concerned public expected that the pending declines in the number of youths would reverse the progressive deterioration in their employment situation. They did not. In fact, during the recessions of the early 1980's, the jobless rate for 16 to 24 year-olds as a group reached a quarterly cyclical high of 19 percent—by far the highest rate for this age group since the Great Depression. From peak to trough, their number employed fell by 2.7 million, a much larger relative drop than the decline for adult workers.[83]

Recessions always have offsetting effects on the labor force participation of young people. On the one hand, economic contractions with the attendant slack demand for workers will induce some youths to stay out of the labor market, perhaps to go to school, thereby curtailing labor force growth. Conversely, unemployment in the family, especially for the prime breadwinner, and the consequent reduction in family income coupled with uncertainty about the near-term future may induce some youths to enter the labor force. In the early 1980's, slack demand brought an abrupt and decisive end to the rising labor force participation of youths. The average participation rate for all 16 to 24 year-olds declined from 69 percent early in 1979 to 66.9 percent early in 1983.[84]

Joblessness among youth edged lower and participation rose moderately as the economy began to expand in 1983, but the recovery in labor force participation was slow. It was not until 1986, when almost 68.6 percent of youths were working or actively seeking work, that their annual rate of participation got back to its level in 1979 before the recessions drove participation down.[85]

In part, the slow recovery reflects the continuance of high jobless levels. **Unemployment among youths simply has not fallen as much or as fast during the current recovery as it might have been expected to, in light of past cyclical experience.** The continued high rate of joblessness among youths this late in this recovery is of particular concern because their population and, consequently, their numbers in the labor force have been declining over the entire period spanning the recessions and the recovery. The population and labor force declines were not trivial: the 16 to 24 year-old civilian noninstitutional population dropped 8.3 percent to 34.1 million in 1986 from a high of 37.2 million in 1980. Their number in the labor force dropped 7.9 percent—2.0 million—from its 1979 peak to 23.4 million in 1986.[86]

Gender and age groups exhibited much different patterns during the recessions and recovery. **The participation rate of male teenagers dropped further during the economic contractions, turned up later in the recovery phase, and did not regain its former level.** It remains five percentage points below the 1979 high. By contrast, women 20 to 24 years of age increased their participation during the early 1980's. As a result, the representation of 20 to 24 year-old women in the labor force increased and that of teenage males declined. Government projections suggest that this pattern is not entirely a cyclical development. The projections anticipate that increasing participation of young women and stable or declining participation for teenage males will continue for the rest of this century. Thus, the changing composition of the labor force will continue along a path that results in a larger share of young women and a smaller share of young men.[87]

Since students—male and female alike—are less likely to be in the labor force than nonstudents, the recent upturn in college enrollment rates might initially appear to offer an explanation for the slow recovery of labor force participation. However, after 1982, school enrollment rates rose in about the same proportions for males and females, but labor force participation declined significantly for teenage males, held about steady for 20 to 24 year-old men, and rose further for young women. The mix of trends suggests that other forces must be instrumental in the differential behavior and the outcomes for young men and young women.

One factor is the vigor of the cyclical recovery in industrial sectors that are more likely to hire men than women. The resumption of job growth since 1982 has been concentrated in service-producing industries, while the manufacturing sector has continued weak, in part because of intense competition from foreign producers. Since the vast majority of young people find their initial employment in service jobs in the service sector, the slow and weak recovery of manufacturing would not, on the surface, appear to cause any special problems for young adults. Historically, however, many young men have gravitated from service jobs into the manufacturing sector of the economy.

By late 1986, manufacturers had rehired or created new jobs to replace only about one-third of the factory jobs that were eliminated between mid-1979 and late 1982, thus

denying young men a traditional path into better-paying, longterm jobs.[88] In 1979, prior to the recessions, factories provided 19.7 percent of the wage and salary jobs held by youths. In 1986, factories provided only 14.0 percent of the positions held by employed youths.[89] Since factory work is dominated by males, the continued weakness in factory labor demand has been one important factor in the less-than-usual cyclical recovery in the employment of young men. Even if manufacturing employment turns up more strongly in 1987 and beyond, the availability of a substantial pool of prime-age workers with prior factory experience is going to make it difficult for young people to land and retain such jobs.

ARMED FORCES

The nation's armed forces long have provided an avenue to good civilian jobs for many youths. Youths in the services may well gain valuable training in some fields that lead to better-paying jobs after their years of military service are over—air traffic control, computer and electronics, and various mechanical skill groups are good examples. About 55 percent of all uniformed personnel are in the age range of 16 to 24 years and about 90 percent of these youths, some 915,000, are men. Minority youths are more likely to serve than white youths. **In 1985, the armed forces were providing jobs and training for an estimated 6.8 percent of all young black men and 4.9 percent of all young white men.**[90]

During the recent years of high unemployment, the military services have been able to recruit more highly-educated youths because of the slack in the civilian side of the economy. But this **upgrading of recruits foreclosed opportunities for dropouts and disadvantaged youths to use military service training and experience as a stepping stone to good civilian jobs.** The loss of such a broad avenue of training, discipline in work life, and on-the-job experience means a much larger burden on the civilian economy to provide such opportunities. Unfortunately, this additional burden was imposed in an environment of slack labor demand and fiscal stringency that resulted in cutbacks in entry and training opportunities in the private and public civilian sectors as well. The dimensions of this loss can not be reliably quantified, but joblessness among dropouts and disadvantaged youths probably is higher than it would have been had the old recruitment ratios persisted through the 1980's. Some youths, who might otherwise have acquired the skills necessary to be competitive in the civilian sector or have chosen to make a military career, never had the chance.

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

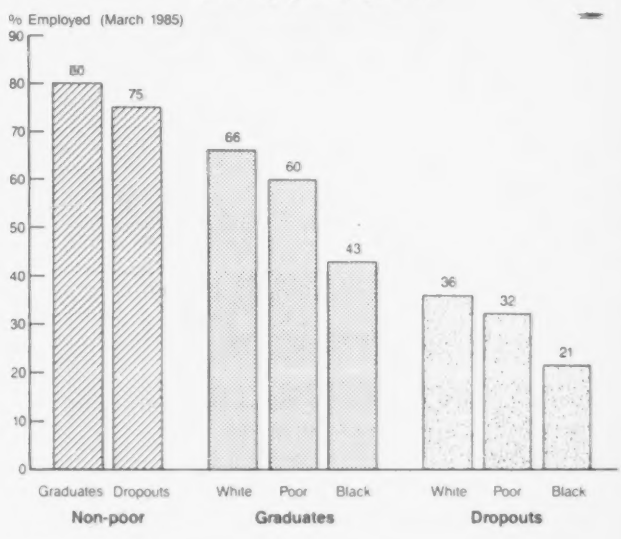
Employment patterns of youths vary considerably by age, race, ethnicity, residence (urban, suburban, or rural), educational attainment, and school enrollment status. Joblessness, low participation, and low employment-population ratios are generally observed for areas of the country or parts of metropolitan areas where economic activity is slack. Since the recovery began in 1983, now almost four years ago, gains in the employment of youths have been spotty and uneven. After allowance for their shrinking numbers in the population, the restoration of pre-recession job to population rates is far from accomplished. Late in 1986, about 20.3 million 16 to 24 year-olds held full- or part-time civilian jobs, down from 22.4 million in 1979—before the recession and the decline in the population began.[91] The percentage of civilian teenagers with jobs was 43 percent in October 1986, compared to 46.6 percent in October 1979.

Minority youths, especially blacks, continue to face poor job prospects. Only 24.5 percent of black 16 to 19

Chart 11

Employment Rates of Teenagers: Links to Race, Economic Status and Education

Youth employment is strongly linked to race, financial status and educational attainment. Eighty percent of non-poor teenagers (those from families earning three times the poverty level) were employed in March 1985, compared with only 60 percent of poor graduates, 32 percent of poor dropouts and only 21 percent of black dropouts.



Source: Andrew M. Sum et al., One Fifth of the Nation's Teenagers: Employment Problems of Poor Youth in America, 1981-1985, Northeastern University, April 1986.

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year-olds and 35 percent of Hispanic teenagers were employed as of October 1986—compared to 47 percent of their white peers—and, at comparable levels of education, their jobless rates were higher, in the case of blacks, more than double those of whites.

CURRENT UNEMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

Late in 1986, about 3 million 16 to 24 year-olds were actively seeking work. Of the 3 million unemployed youths, about 2.5 million were single (never married), about 150,000 young men and 330,000 young women were married with a spouse present, and a total of 125,000 (2 to 1 women) were divorced, separated or widowed. The unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year-olds averaged about 13 percent at the end of 1986, compared to 11.8 percent early in 1979. Jobless rates were highest for the youngest members of the group—about 19 percent for 16 to 17 year-olds contrasted with 10 percent for 20 to 24 year-olds.[92]

Most unemployed youths are white, but unemployment rates are much higher for minority youth. Late in 1986, jobless rates were around 29 percent for black 16 to 24 year-olds and 14 percent for Hispanics, as compared to 10.5 percent for whites.

Jobless rates for students and nonstudents are shown below:

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF YOUTHS: OCTOBER 1986
(percent unemployed)

Age	Total	White	Black	Hispanic
Nonstudents:				
16 to 19 years	19.9	18.0	32.2	17.4
20 to 24 years	10.6	8.1	27.0	12.0
Students:				
16 to 19 years	16.3	13.9	38.8	17.4
20 to 24 years	7.7	6.6	19.0	13.6

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, Nov. 1986, Vol. 33, No. 11, p. 15

ANNUAL WORK EXPERIENCE AND INCOME

The number and proportion of youths who work at some time during the year is, of course, much higher than the number employed during an average month of the year. Three of every four 16 to 24 year-olds worked for pay sometime during 1985. Many 15 year-olds had some employment as well, and some youths had income from sources other than earnings.[93] Public assistance and welfare payments to young mothers are, for example, reflected in the annual income figures.

In all, about 30 million, or four of every five, 15 to 24 year-old youths reported some individual income during 1985. Young men were slightly more likely to have income than women. More than 90 percent of all 20 to 24 year-olds and 61 percent of all teenagers had income.[94]

The proportion of youths with work experience and earned income rises sharply with age. Less than half of the 16 and 17 year-olds worked at all, but 75 percent of the 18 and 19 year-olds did. Most teenagers work part time, and those who worked full-time generally did so for less than 13 weeks. Such work patterns are subordinate to school attendance. By contrast, more than half of all 20 to 24 year-olds worked year-round and 42.5 percent held full-time jobs all year.[95]

The annual incomes of youths reflected these work patterns. The median income of teenagers with income—12 million in all—was $1,850. The few who worked full-time year-round (407,000 males and 333,000 females) reported much higher incomes—$9,050 for males and $8,372 for females. The median incomes of 20 to 24 year-old men and women who had income were $8,629 and $6,155, respectively in 1985. As with teenagers, those who worked full-time, year-round had much higher medians; $13,827 for men and $11,757 for women.[96]

White youths were more likely to have worked than black youths. Almost two-thirds of white teenagers and 87 percent of white 20 to 24 year-olds worked. This compares with percentages of 43 for both black and Hispanic teenagers and 68 and 76, respectively, for black and Hispanic 20 to 24 year-olds. Regardless of gender or age, Hispanic youths were more likely to work on full-time jobs and were slightly more likely to work year round than either blacks or whites.[97]

These work patterns were reflected in annual income figures. Hispanic teenagers' average annual income was 10 percent above that of whites and 30 percent larger than that of black teens.

By the early 20's, however, the median incomes of white youths are sharply higher than the incomes of blacks or Hispanics, as is shown in the following tabulation:

INCOME BY SEX, AGE, AND RACE/ETHNICITY: 1985

	MEN		WOMEN	
	15 to 19	20 to 24	15 to 19	20 to 24
Percent with income:				
Total	67.6	94.0	63.7	90.1
Whites	71.1	95.8	67.0	91.1
Blacks	50.0	83.7	47.6	86.0
Hispanics	50.3	90.0	42.5	78.8
Median income of those with income:				
Total	$1,893	$8,629	$1,796	$6,155
Whites	1,931	9,249	1,796	6,625
Blacks	1,669	5,763	1,849	3,894
Hispanics	2,198	7,311	1,965	5,413

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, Advance Report, (GPO Wash DC 1986) P-60, 154, pp.11-19

SUMMARY

Thus far in the 1980's, a shrinking population and lower labor force participation have not ameliorated high unemployment among youths. Indeed, almost four years of economic recovery brought the 1986 employment-population ratio up to only 59.5 percent, 1.4 percentage points below 1979. Youth unemployment averaged 13.3 percent in 1986, still well above the 11.8 percent reading for 1979.

The poor employment prospects for youths in general translate into a virtual depression for young blacks. Joblessness among black youths averaged 27 percent for the year: 24 percent for 20 to 24 year-olds and 39 percent for teens. With the relative increase in the black unemployment rate, the decline in their employment-population ratio, and the lower earnings experience, a significant share of black youths are "out of the system." Only 78 percent of 20 to 24 year-old black and other men were in the labor force in 1986, down from 90 percent in 1960.[98]

Of 16 to 24 year-old blacks not enrolled in school in October 1986, a total of 644,000 (24 percent) did not have a high school diploma. These youths appear to have bleak prospects. Almost 40 percent of them (252,000) were not working or looking for work and of the meager 61 percent in the labor force, nearly half were unemployed.[99]

Notes

Abbreviations:
BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce
BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor

77. BLS, *Labor Force Statistics Derived From the Current Population Survey*, Bulletin 2096, (GPO Wash. DC, 1982) pp. 503, 519, 726 and *Employment and Earnings*, Jan. 1987, Vol 34, No 1, pp. 158, 214
78. Ibid
79. Ibid
80. Ibid
81. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Nov. 1986, Vol 33, No 11, p. 15
82. Ibid, p. 19
83. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Feb. 1980 (p. 17) and July 1984 (p. 16)
84. Ibid
85. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Jan 1987, Vol 34, No 1, p. 158 and *Labor Force Statistics Derived From the Current Population Survey*, Bulletin 2096, (GPO Wash. DC, 1982) p. 503
86. Ibid
87. BLS, *Employment Projections For 1995: Data and Methods*, Bulletin 2253, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986), p. 17
88. BLS, "Employment Developments During 1986", *Monthly Labor Review*, Feb. 1987
89. Ibid
90. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Jan. 1987, Vol 34, No 1, p. 158
91. Ibid
92. Ibid
93. BOC, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, Advance Report, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-60, 154, pp. 11-19
94. Ibid, p. 12
95. BLS, "Work Experience of The Population", *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1986
96. BOC, *Money Income and Poverty Statistics of Families and Persons in the United States: 1985*, Advance Report, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) pp. 60, 154, pp. 13, 15
97. BLS, "Work Experience of The Population", *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1986, p.
98. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Jan 1987, Vol 34, No 1, pp. 158-61 and *Labor Force Statistics Derived From the Current Population Survey*, Bulletin 2096, (GPO Wash. DC, 1982) pp. 123, 186
99. BLS, *Employment and Earnings*, Nov. 1986, Vol 33, No 11, p. 15

Health

In general, today's youths enjoy better health and greater life expectancy than their parents and grandparents, owing to medical and nutritional gains and extensions of health-care insurance systems to include some low-income families. Mortality rates from natural causes have been low among youths for many years and have continued to edge lower in the 1980's compared to the 1960's and earlier.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Life expectancy of American youths has risen progressively since the turn of the century. (Chart 12) As with the general population, **life expectancy is greater and has risen more among young women than among young men while the gap between whites and blacks persists.** At age 20, the average life expectancy of a white woman was 59.9 years in 1982, up more than one-third from 43.8 years in 1900. Black 20 year-old women had an expectancy of 55.4 additional years in 1980, up from 36.9 years in 1900. Black and white 20 year-old men had life expectancies in 1900 of 35.1 and 42.2 additional years, respectively. By 1980, their life expectancies had risen more than ten years to 47.2 years for blacks and 53.0 years for whites.[100]

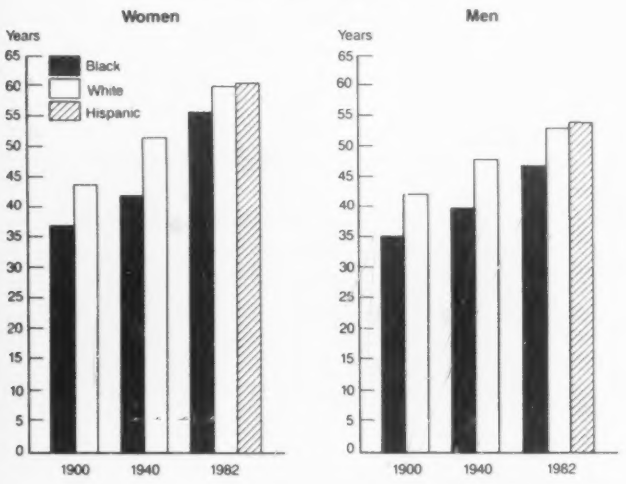
Declining death rates among youths are one factor in the gains in life expectancy. In 1900, death rates for both male and female youths were 590 per 100,000. By 1940, these rates had fallen to 230 for males and 180 per 100,000 for females. In 1984, the figures were 140 for young men and 51 per 100,000 for young women. **Accidents, especially in autos, are the primary cause of death among American youth. Death by accident at 49 per 100,000 young men and women, was responsible for almost twice as much loss of life as the next three leading causes: homicide and suicide (each 12 per 100,000) and cancer (6 per 100,000).**[101]

Chart 12

Life Expectancy

Although American youth live longer than in previous generations, the gap between white and black life expectancy persists.

Life Expectancy at Age 20 by Sex and Race



Women			
Year	Black	White	Hispanic
1900	36.9	43.8	n.a.
1940	42.1	51.4	n.a.
1982	55.5	59.9	60.4

Men			
Year	Black	White	Hispanic
1900	35.1	42.2	n.a.
1940	39.7	47.8	n.a.
1982	46.9	53.0	53.8

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, "Vital Statistics of the United States."

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FUNCTIONAL DISABILITY

One of every 20 youths has some difficulty performing one or more basic physical activities, such as seeing, hearing, walking, or speaking. **Almost one of every 100 has a severe disability; that is, they could not perform the activity at all or could only perform it with help from another person.**

FUNCTIONAL DISABILITY AMONG YOUTHS: 1984
(in thousands)

	15 to 24 year-olds		
	Total	Men	Women
Population	39,297	19,589	19,708
With a limitation:			
Number	2,054	946	1,108
Percent	5.2	4.8	5.6
With a severe limitation:			
Number	346	142	204
Percent	0.9	0.7	1.0

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Disability, Functional Limitation and Health Insurance Coverage: 1984-85*, (GPO Wash DC 1986) P-70, 8, pp. 11, 14, 18

HEALTH THREATS

Concerns about the health of youths generally center on personally-determined behaviors, such as drinking, drug abuse, and smoking, that are associated with health problems later in life. The emergence of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is obviously another matter of increasing concern among medical professionals. Armed forces data on more than 300,000 military recruits—largely young men from lower and middle income and education backgrounds—showed that about 1.5 in every 1,000 tested positive for AIDS virus antibodies. The ratio of infected females to males is one to 2½, much lower than the ratio of confirmed AIDS cases. Because the symptoms of AIDS do not appear until years after infection, sexually active youths are endangered by this new and almost always fatal communicable disease.[102]

USE OF ALCOHOL

National survey data paint a vivid picture of the extent and nature of alcohol use and abuse by young Americans. Ninety-two percent **of 1985 high school seniors had tried alcohol, two-thirds had done so in the past 30 days, and 5 percent had done so each day for the last 30 days.**[103] Graduates of earlier classes that went on to college had increased their use of alcohol. More than nine of ten college students had used alcohol in the past year and bouts of heavy drinking—five or more drinks on one occasion in the two weeks prior to the survey—are very common. More than 55 percent of the college men and 34 percent of college women reported such behavior.[104]

Among all 18 to 25 year-olds, 93 percent of had tried alcohol, 87 percent had used it in the last year, and 72 percent had used it in the last month. These ratios were marginally lower than in 1979 but somewhat higher than in 1974. Use of alcohol ratios for 12 to 17 year-olds also are high at 56 percent ever, 52 percent in the last year, and 32 percent in the last month. Use of alcohol by this younger group has diminished since 1979 but was still as high as in 1974. **In all, 30 million 12 to 25 year-olds reported drinking in the 30 days before the 1985 survey, and 6.8 million were less than 18 years of age, clearly below the legal drinking age in any state.** Use and abuse of alcohol by youths is frequently associated with trouble with the law. The most direct connection is arrests for drunkeness, liquor law violations or driving under the influence. During 1985, more than one million youths were arrested under such statutes.[105] Regardless of age, current drinkers are six or more times as likely to use drugs as nondrinkers.[106]

USE OF ALCOHOL BY AMERICAN YOUTHS: 1974-85.

Age and Year	PERCENT THAT USED ALCOHOL:		
	Ever	Last Year	Last Month
18 to 25 years:			
1985	92.8	87.4	71.5
1979	95.3	86.6	75.9
1974	81.6	77.1	69.3
12 to 17 years:			
1985	55.9	52.0	31.5
1979	70.3	53.6	37.2
1974	54.0	51.5	34.0

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse. *Highlights: 1985 National Survey On Drug Abuse,"* (NIDA, Wash DC, 1986) pp. 7-9

DRUG ABUSE

Drug abuse by youths peaked during the late 1970's and has diminished significantly since then. Use of marijuana, the drug most frequently used by all age groups in our society, dropped sharply over the 1979-1985 period. Among young adults in the age group 18 to 25, the percent that had ever tried marijuana declined about one-tenth, from 68 percent in 1979 to 60 percent in 1985, but use in the last year had fallen by more than two-tenths (47 to 37 percent) and use in the last month had fallen almost four-tenths, from more than 35 to 22 percent. **Use of marijuana by 18 to 25 year-olds was at a lower rate in 1985 than in any of the surveys conducted since measurement began in 1972. Nonetheless, at the time of the survey, more than seven million youths had used marijuana in the past 30 days.**

USE OF MARIJUANA BY AMERICAN YOUTHS: 1974-85

Age and Year	PERCENT THAT USED MARIJUANA:		
	Ever	Last Year	Last Month
18 to 25 years:			
1985	60.5	37.0	21.9
1979	68.2	46.9	35.4
1974	52.7	34.2	25.2
12 to 17 years:			
1985	23.7	20.0	12.3
1979	30.9	24.1	16.7
1974	23.0	18.5	12.0

Source: National Insitute on Drug Abuse, *Highlights: 1985 National Survey On Drug Abuse,"* (NIDA, Wash DC, 1986) pp. 7-9

The general downward trend of drug abuse may somewhat obscure the fact that **there has been little reduction in the use of cocaine, which probably has become increas-**

ingly available and less expensive over this period. An estimated 2.5 million 18 to 24 year-olds and 400,000 12 to 17 year-olds had used cocaine in the 30 days before the 1985 survey.[107] There may be more prestige surrounding the use of cocaine than other drugs, and regular users and initial triers may be misled by the gradual buildup of dependency. Moreover, potential or active users may not take full account of the potentially more addictive and more toxic effects of newer methods of preparing the drug, as in its "crack" form. While less than one in every ten cocaine users reported intravenous use, this form of administration carries the additional danger of transmitting AIDS through contaminated needles.

USE OF COCAINE BY AMERICAN YOUTHS: 1974-85

Age and Year	PERCENT THAT USED COCAINE:		
	Ever	Last Year	Last Month
18 to 25 years:			
1985	25.2	16.4	7.7
1982	28.3	18.8	6.8
1979	27.5	19.6	9.3
1974	12.7	8.1	3.1
12 to 17 years:			
1985	5.2	4.4	1.8
1982	6.5	4.1	1.6
1979	5.4	4.2	1.4
1974	3.6	2.7	1.0

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Highlights: 1985 National Household Survey On Drug Abuse*," (NIDA, Wash DC, 1986) pp. 7-9

Evidence on drug use from a much smaller survey of high school seniors and a subsample of those who go on to college shows essentially the same pattern as the larger national survey. Overall abuse of drugs by high school seniors and by those seniors who go on to college was down between one-fourth and one-third from 1979 to 1984.[108] There was no further net reduction between 1984 and 1985, however. The net 1979-85 decline is sharpest for marijuana, but there were significant reductions in the use of most other drugs, except cocaine. Use of cocaine increased for the class of 1985 compared to the class of 1984. Cocaine use in all categories (tried at least once, used in last year, and used daily in the last month) were higher in 1985 than any annual measure since the survey began in 1975.[109]

Drug use has adverse legal and medical consequences for many youths. During 1985, 350,000 youths were arrested for drug abuse violations and were in jail, prison, or juvenile correction facilities for drug-related offenses. Data on medical treatment for drug-related emergencies in hospitals is available for a sample of hospitals in 27 large cities that collectively contain about one-third of the nation's population. These data show sizable numbers of serious drug related problems; more than 34,500 15 to 25 year-olds were treated for drug-related medical emergencies in 1984. A minimum of 512 15 to 25 year-olds died as a result of drug-related incidents. Medical examiners' reports show a strong correlation between drug-use and suicide. About one-third of the deaths and 37 percent of the emergency room treatments for drug problems involved suicide attempts. Often these suicide attempts involved mixing drugs and alcohol.[110]

SUICIDE

During 1984, 5,026 youths committed suicide.[111] Although the suicide rate among youths is one-third lower than the rate for older Americans, at 12.5 per 100,000, it is half again the rate of the 1950's. The rate had risen slowly but progressively during good and bad economic times, and before and after the big upswing in drug use in the 1960's and 1970's. It reached a level of 12.4 per 100,000 in 1979.[112] Since then, the suicide rate has stayed near that level. Suicide rates are more than three times higher for men than for women, and appear to be somewhat higher among college students than non-students, and among those whose academic performance is generally better-than-average. Blacks are less than half as likely to commit suicide as are whites.

Experts and laypersons alike associate increases in the suicide rate with competitive pressures for success, to the declining nuclear family, and, more generally, to anomie—an increased sense of aloneness and depression in our society. The latter may help explain the fact that suicide rates have risen for all age groups and the demographic argument may help explain the fact that rates for youths rose somewhat faster than rates for older, less-crowded cohorts.

Although there is no empirically validated theory to explain the fact, suicide rates of youths have tended to be highest and to increase more when youths' representation in the total population was highest. Based on this observation, the suicide rate of youths should now be declining as the proportion of youths in the population declines. While the population of youths declined significantly between 1980 and 1984, the suicide rate was essentially unchanged. It remains to be seen whether further declines in the number of young adults will be accompanied by a declining suicide rate and whether the Baby Boom generation will continue to be a group with a high suicide rate as it works its way through the life cycle.

HOMICIDE

During the ascendancy of the Baby Boom generation, **homicide rates for young adults more than doubled, reaching 14.5 per 100,000 in 1979. Since then, the homicide rate has drifted lower to 12 per 100,000 in 1984.**[113] The long-run increase was concentrated among blacks. Homicide rates are six times higher for black men (49 per 100,000) than for white men and four times higher for black women (11 per 100,000) than for white women. If recent rates persist, black men between ages 15 and 25 will lose one-half of one percent of their population to homicide before adulthood: five of every 1,000 black men turning 15 this year will die in homicides before age 25.

HEALTH SERVICES

Survey data on visits to physicians and dentists show little change in young people's use of health services since the late 1960's, when programs like Medicaid extended health care services to more of the low-income segment of the population. Information on hospital and emergency room use by youths show a modest decline in the 1980's from the 1970's. Fewer births per capita, the major reason for hospital use by young women, and a reduction in the automobile accident rate, a major reason for hospitalization of young men, appear to account for the small declines.[114]

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

Young adults are less likely to be covered by health insurance than older adults, and coverage ratios are much lower for blacks and Hispanics than for white non-Hispanics. Late in 1985, **21.4 percent of 16 to 24 year-olds were not covered by health insurance programs. By contrast, the proportion of the overall civilian population not covered was one-third lower, about 13.3 percent.** Of the 78.6 percent of youths that were covered, about 8 percent were covered by public programs and the remainder by private plans. Employment-related health insurance coverage extends to only about 55 percent of all 16 to 24 year-olds compared to about 75 percent of middle-aged persons, who are more likely to be employed.[115] Coverage of minority youths is lower, even when public programs, such as Medicaid, are taken into account.

Notes

Abbreviations:

BOC: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce

NCHS: National Center for Health Statistics, Department of Health and Human Services

NIDA: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Department of Health and Human Services

100. BOC, *Historical Statistics of the United States to 1970*, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1975) p. and *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1985) p. 69
101. BOC, *Historical Statistics of the United States to 1970*, Part 1, (GPO Wash. DC, 1975) and NCHS, Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1984, Vol 35, No 6, Supp 2, (PHS)86-1120, pp. 22,46
102. National Academy of Sciences, *Confronting AIDS: Directions for Public Health, Health Care, and Research*, (National Academy Press, Wash. DC, 1986)
103. University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, "Youth Drug Use Little Improved In Class of 1985," press release, Nov. 6, 1985, p. 5
104. University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, "Study Indicates Cocaine Use Remains High," press release, July 3, 1986, pp. 3, 5
105. FBI, Crime In The United States, 1985, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) p. 180
106. NIDA, *Highlights: 1985 National Household Survey On Drug Abuse*," (NIDA, Wash. DC, 1986) pp. 7-9
107. Ibid, p. 5
108. University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, "Youth Drug Use Little Improved In Class of 1985," press release, Nov. 6, 1985, p. 3
109. Ibid, p. 6
110. NIDA, *Data From The Drug Abuse Warning Network, 1984*, Series 1, No 4, (ADM)85-1407, pp. 10, 14, 47
111. NCHS, *Advance Report of Final Mortality Statistics, 1984*, Vol 35, No 6, Supp 2, (PHS)86-1120, pp. 22,46
112. Ibid, p. 25
113. Ibid, p. 15
114. NCHS, *Current Estimates From The National Health Interview Survey, 1984*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) Series 19, 156, pp. 69, 113-25
115. BOC, *Disability, Functional Limitation and Health Insurance Coverage: 1984-85*, (GPO Wash. DC, 1986) P-70, 8, pp. 11,14,18

Youths and the Law

In the United States, youths are the segment of the population most likely to be victimized by a criminal, most likely to commit a crime, most likely to be arrested, and, after their early 20's, most likely to be imprisoned for committing a crime. Criminal offenders in our society are most often young, disadvantaged males from urban backgrounds.[115] **Most disadvantaged youths are law-abiding and, indeed, more often are victims than offenders.** Those arrested and those incarcerated are disproportionately from poverty backgrounds. Black and Hispanic youths are over represented among both the victims of crime and the victimizers.

VICTIMIZATION OF YOUTHS[116]

Crime is common in our society. During 1984, about one of every ten Americans more than 11 years of age fell victim to a personal crime. Because they are more likely to be in close association with that segment of the population that commits the most street crimes (other youths), young people have much higher criminal victimization rates than the rest of the population; **almost one of every five teenagers and one of every six 20 to 24 year-olds were victimized during 1984.**

CRIMES OF THEFT

Each year, about one in 14 Americans has something stolen. Theft is much more common among the young: about one of every nine youths experience a theft in a typical year, about twice the theft rate for 35 to 49 year-olds. These are mostly small-loss thefts: completed larcenies without contact involved the loss of sums of less than $50 in more than half of all reported cases. Theft rates are about the same for young men and young women and, while teenagers tend to have slightly higher rates than 20 to 24 year-olds, the difference is negligible. Less than 30 percent of thefts from youths are reported to the police. Thefts are reported most frequently when there is some hope of recovering the property or when insurance coverage requires reporting, but most losses are regarded by the victim as insignificant and, therefore, reporting is "not worth the bother." Households maintained by youths, and especially those maintained by teenagers, are more likely to be burglarized or suffer thefts than households maintained by middle-aged adults. Youths also are more likely to have their cars stolen.

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

While theft is a pervasive, costly and sometimes threatening crime, the consequences of violent acts are much more serious. One of every 33 Americans older than 11 years of age suffers an attempted or completed crime of **assault, robbery, or rape** annually. **About one out of every 15 youths experienced a violent crime during 1984.** That was about triple the violent crime rate for 35 to 49 year-olds.

Nor are the numbers of violent crimes against youths inconsiderable. In 1984, **there were about 2.3 million completed or attempted violent crimes against youths. About one-third of the youthful victims sustained physical injury and many required some form of medical treatment.** Between six and nine percent of all young crime victims receive hospital care for their injuries. The hundreds of thousands of attempted or completed violent crimes not accompanied by physical injury are, nevertheless, a factor in everyday decisions on the safety of the streets and such events have persuaded many youths that it is not safe to attempt to attend night school or to work at a job that requires late hours. **Reduced street crime in inner-city poverty neighborhoods would permit youths living in such neighborhoods to take greater advantage of educational and employment opportunities.**

ESTIMATED VIOLENT CRIMES PER 1,000 YOUTHS: 1984

Total	65.7
Rape	2.3
Robbery	10.7
Completed with injury	(2.4)
Attempted with injury	(1.3)
Completed without injury	(3.7)
Attempted without injury	(3.3)
Assault	52.7
Aggravated with injury	(7.8)
Simple assault with injury	(9.8)
Attempted with weapon	(13.1)
Attempted without weapon	(22.0)

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1984*, NCJ-100435, May 1986, p. 15

There are significant differences in criminal victimization rates of youths by gender, race, and residence. Except

for rape, young women experience much lower violent crime rates than men. Men are twice as likely to be robbed and about one and one-half times as likely to be assaulted as young women. Almost two-thirds of all violent crimes against young women are committed by someone known to the victim. By contrast, about 60 percent of the attempted and completed violent crimes against young men are committed by strangers. Blacks and Hispanics experience marginally higher crime rates than do whites. Thefts from whites are considerably more frequent while violent personal crimes are higher for blacks (especially women) than for whites and Hispanics.

Youths who live in inner cities experience much higher crime rates than those who live in the suburbs. Suburban youths, in turn, have much higher victimization rates than do youths who live in small towns or rural areas. Youths are more likely than older victims to take self-protective actions in a violent crime situation and are somewhat more likely to be injured than are middle-age crime victims. Older adults are more likely to be injured in a robbery, whereas youths are more likely to be injured in an assault.

PHYSICAL INJURY AND TREATMENT

About half of all injured violent crime victims are treated by friends or family, police officers or paramedics, or in doctors' offices. More than 30 percent receive treatment in an emergency room and a little less than one-fourth of the injured victims of violent crimes receive hospital care after the crime.

About half of all violent crimes committed against young adults were reported to the police—and sometimes there were reports to other officials, such as school authorities. Reporting to the police was somewhat more frequent when the crime was committed by an unknown assailant, and the frequency of reporting was greater for completed than for attempted crimes. When the offender was known to the victim, the most frequent reason for reporting the crime to the police was to ensure that the victimization was not repeated.

CRIMINAL OFFENDERS

Young victims of violent crimes usually perceive the age of the offender to be in the 20's. Only a minority of offenders are thought by the victim to be more than 30 years of age. The vast majority of victims identified the offender as being of the same race and generally around the same age as the victim.[117] Arrest records strongly support the assessment of victims. The typical offender is a young male, his crime is often quite easily detected, and he is likely to be a repeater. His involvement with the law enforcement system often began early in life, sometimes before the age of ten. **One of every 20 persons arrested for a violent crime is less than 15 years old, and one in seven property crime arrests is a person less than 15.**[118]

The majority of offenders are from poverty backgrounds; they generally are behind or no longer enrolled in school; they have a much higher frequency of unemployment; and, when employed, they are more likely than their peers to be in marginal, low-paying jobs. The propensity of youths to commit crimes apparently declines with age. Property crime arrests peak at age 16, and violent crime arrests peak at age 18.[119] In part, the arrest pattern reflects the neutralization of habitual offenders by imprisonment and the filtering out of those early offenders who "go straight."

At early ages, a youth's first offense is likely to result in warnings or limited informal supervision by social services agencies. After a collection of seemingly minor offenses or a serious violent crime, a young offender is likely to experience a first detention in a juvenile facility. **During 1984, there were an estimated 625,000 admissions to juvenile detention and correctional facilities.** More than 520,000 admissions were to public facilities; just under 105,000 to private facilities. The average daily population in juvenile facilities increased seven percent between 1979 and 1982, then eased off about one percent by 1984.[120]

On February 1, 1985, there were 49,322 persons detained in juvenile facilities run by public authorities. **Just over 93 percent of these adolescents were accused of or had been committed to the institution for acts that would be criminal acts if committed by an adult. About one-fifth of the adolescents (12,215) held in these institutions were being held for a violent delinquent act, including murder, aggravated assault, robbery or forcible rape.** Almost half were held for property crimes including auto theft, burglary, larceny-theft and arson. Ten percent were being held for parole violations, and about five percent were held for narcotics violations. Males constituted 86 percent of all juveniles in public custody in 1985. Whites were 61 percent, blacks 37 percent, and other races 2 percent. Hispanics (who may be of any race) accounted for 13 percent of the detained juvenile population, about twice their proportion in the population.[121]

Of those held in public and private juvenile detention and correctional facilities, 97 percent were juveniles. The rate of confinement per 100,000 of the age-eligible population was 185 for public facilities and 127 for private facilities, for an overall rate of 312.[122] Three-fouths of the juveniles in custody in 1985 were committed (in effect, sentenced), 18 percent were detained (in effect, under arrest), and 8 percent were voluntary admissions.

Total expenditures to staff, operate and maintain public juvenile facilities totaled over $1.8 billion in 1984. The average cost to house one resident for a year in a public juvenile facility was $25,200. Expenditures varied substantially by State, ranging from $15,000 in Florida to $66,000 in Connecticut.[123]

ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has estimated that 16 to 18 percent of the adult population has been arrested at least once for a non-traffic violation.[124] There was a sustained, major rise in arrests and imprisonments of youths during the 1960's and 1970's. The arrest rate for 10 to 17 year-olds rose from about 3.6 percent of the "eligible" population in 1960 to a peak of 8.2 percent in the mid-1970's. Since then, the arrest rate has slipped back to around 7.7 percent. These arrest figures do not permit identification of individuals and clearly include many youths who have experienced multiple arrests.[125]

About two-thirds of all arrests for property crimes and one-half of all violent crime arrests are persons under 25 years of age. In all, 5.1 million youths were arrested during 1985. More than 1.3 million of the arrests were for the crimes of murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft or arson.[126] Because of the design of the criminal justice system, persons less than 19 years of age are seldom held in jails or prisons for significant periods. However, the nation's jails and prisons are heavily stocked with young adults. The latest quinquennial surveys of jails and state prisons show that well over half the incarcerated population is less than 30 years of age and a substantial proportion is less than 25 years of age.[127] **Like the victims of crime, the incarcerated are most often male, poor, and less educated. They are much more likely than the general population to be drug and alcohol abusers, and they tend to have experienced little success in the labor market.**[128]

The over-representation of young people in arrest and incarceration figures is primarily a result of property crime. Violent crime convictions, by contrast, are about the same for teens, young men and mature men.[129] There is no clear evidence that petty crimes escalate over time to more violent crimes, but there is some indication that violent juvenile offenses are good predictors of violent adult offenses. That is, those who were once committed for violent crimes as youths, or even as pre-teens, are more likely to reappear as violent adult offenders.

Environmental factors doubtless play a role in the formation of criminal behavior. Those abused as children, for example, apparently are more likely to engage in crime, and to do so in a more violent manner. Offenders of all ages are more likely to have had one or more relatives who have been in prison and to have been raised in undisciplined, frequently violent home settings. Heavy drinking and drug abuse were very common among those in prison, especially for those serving time for property crimes.

PERSONAL COMMENT

Causality in criminal behavior, as well as other behaviors, is difficult to quantify. Large proportions of criminal offenders are from poverty backgrounds, are less educated, and grew up in turbulent homes without strong values. **However, the vast majority of persons from poverty backgrounds are not criminals and the vast majority of youths who have a scrape with the law enforcement system do not become criminals.**

Criminals often get started in crime as youths due to a mix of attention-getting, peer pressure, and thrill-seeking. Supporting evidence is provided by the fact that criminals who began in crime as members of gangs tend to have engaged in more violent behavior, more frequent criminal activity, and to have done so at earlier ages. With the re-emergence of youth gang activity in big cities, there is reason for special concern about collective criminality.[130]

As with several other areas of concern about the progress of youths toward constructive maturity, criminal behavior appears for many youngsters well before they qualify to be youths. **Any set of interventions designed to assist youths in avoiding the pitfalls of criminal behavior must be aimed in large part at a pre-teen audience, with special focus on the poorest and least educated segments of our society.**

Notes

Abbreviations:

BJS: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Department of Justice

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice

115. BJS, *Report To The Nation On Crime And Justice*, NCJ-87068, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) pp. 31-2

116. All victimization data are from BJS, *Criminal Victimization in the United States*, 1984, NCJ-100435, May 1986, pp. 1-156

117. Ibid, p.

118. BJS, *Report To The Nation On Crime And Justice*, NCJ-87068, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1983) pp. 31-2

119. FBI, *Crime In The United States, 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) p. 163

120. BJS, *Children In Custody*, NCJ-102457, October 1986, p. 2
121. Ibid, pp. 1, 3, 5, 6
122. Ibid, p. 3 and unpublished data from BJS
123. Ibid, p. 5
124. BJS, *Report To The Nation On Crime And Justice*, NCJ-87068, (GPO Wash. DC, 1983) p. 36
125. FBI, *Crime In The United States, 1985*, (GPO, Wash. DC, 1986) p. 180 and Age-Specific Arrest Rates, 1965-84, June 1984, pp. 46-9
126. BJS, *Sourcebook Of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1984*, NCJ-87575, October 1985, p. 168
127. BJS, *Prisoners and Drugs*, Feb 1983, NCJ-86223, and Prisoners And Alcohol, NCJ-87575, March 1983
128. BJS, *Sourcebook Of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1984*, NCJ-87575, October 1985, p. 168
129. BJS, *Report To The Nation On Crime And Justice*, NCJ-87068, (GPO Wash. DC, 1983) p. 33
130. Ibid, pp. 36-7

YOUTH AND AMERICA'S FUTURE:
THE WILLIAM T. GRANT FOUNDATION COMMISSION ON WORK, FAMILY AND CITIZENSHIP

American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot (July 1987)
James Wetzel

Drawing on the latest, statistically reliable government surveys, this demographic review captures much of the diversity inherent in a collective portrait of American 16–24 year-olds. Includes data on marriage, childbearing, living arrangements, income, education, employment, health and juvenile justice. Historical trends as well as future projections are presented along with *12 charts, 18 tables.*

Current Federal Policies and Programs for Youth (June 1987)
J.R. Reingold and Associates

Who is doing what for youth in the federal government? This concise survey of current federal policies and programs for youth in Education, Health and Human Services, Labor, Justice and Defense provides a one-of-a-kind resource for researchers, practitioners, analysts and policymakers who want quick access to accurate information about federal youth policy. *Includes state-level allocation tables.*

Youth Policies and Practices in Selected Countries (August 1987)
Rosemary George

Presents the salient features of the post-compulsory education and training policies of 11 foreign countries designed to smooth the transition of non-college bound youth into the workplace. The countries are: Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, France, West Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Norway and Sweden. *Includes tables.*

* * *

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